

LAMENTATIONS / A NEW TRANSLATION WITH A COMMENTARY
ANTHOLOGIZED FROM TALMUDIC, MIDRASHIC AND RABBINIC SOURCES

איכה ישבה בדד העיר רבתי עם היתה
כאלמנה רבתי בגוים עירתי במורעות היתה
למוס בכו תבכה בלילה ודמועה על לחיה
אין לה מנוח מכל אהביה כל רעה בגדו
בה היו לה לאיבים גלתה יהודה מעט ומרב
עבודה היא ישבה בגוים לא מצאה מחוז כל
רדפיה השלמה בין המזרים דרכי ציון
אכלות מבלי באי מועד כל שעריה עיומוין
כהניה נאנחים בתוכה ונזת והיא מר לה
היו פריה לראש איביה עולו כי ידוד הוגה
על רב פעיעה עוללית הלכו שבי לפני ער
ויצא מן בת ציון כל הדרה היו עריה כאיבים
לא משאו מרעה וילכו בלא כח לפני רודף
זכרה ירושלים יבוי עניה ומרודית כל מזמרת
אשר היו מימי קדם בנפל עמה ביד שר ואין
עוזר לה ראות פרים שחקו על מעבדתה
חטא חטאה ירושלים על כן לזדה היתה
כל מכבדיה תזלות כי ראו ערותה גם העם
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LAMENTATIONS / A NEW TRANSLATION
WITH A COMMENTARY ANTHOLOGIZED FROM
TALMUDIC, MIDRASHIC AND RABBINIC SOURCES.

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Translated and compiled by
Rabbi Meir Zlotowitz

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by
Rabbi Nosson Scherman

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הסכמת הגאון האמיתי שר התורה ועמוד ההוראה מורנו ורבנו מרן ר' משה פיינשטיין שליט"א

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משה פיינשטיין
ר"מ תפארת ירושלים
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בע"ה

הנה ידיו הרב הנכבד מאד מוה"ר מאיר יעקב בן ידידי הרב הגאון ר' אהרן ולאטאוויץ שליט"א.
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בדרך התורה. ויש מזה תועלת לקרב לב הקוראים. אף מאלו שנחקרו קצת. לאבינו שבשמים ולקיים
מצותיו. ועתה חבר ספר כזה גם על מגילת איכה. ובכך ראה אותו בני הרה"י ר' רוד שליט"א ושבח
מאד. אשר על כן דבר טוב הוא מה שמדפיסו ומוציאו לאור עולם להגדיל אהבת השי"ת ותורתו
הקדושה ואמונתו בנאולה שהובטח לנו מהשי"ת ע"י משיח צדקנו בקרוב.

וגם אני מברך את ידידי הנכבד מאד הרב ר' נתן שערמאן שליט"א אשר הוסיף גופך לבאר תוכן כל
מגילה ומגילה במקצת לפי רבני חו"ל בפתיחת הספר בדברים המושכים את הלב לתורה ויראת
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וע"ז באתי על החתום בב"ה סיון תשל"ו.

נאום משה פיינשטיין

NOTES

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מנהל ומזכיר וידע הרבה דבר קטן י"ג



With the publication of this volume, the third in a series, the ARTSCROLL TANACH SERIES is a reality. The overwhelming response to the previous two offerings — *Esther* and *Ruth* — has clearly demonstrated that there is an audience for Torah publications of this sort.

More than we realized, these works are filling a gap which has too long been left unfilled, and even worse, filled by those to whom the word of God is a nostalgic curiosity rather than a living reality.

The ARTSCROLL TANACH SERIES is being published **להחזיר עטרה ליושנה**, to restore the crown of valid Torah interpretation to its true bearers..... The series will provide a new, free-flowing translation based upon, and incorporating the interpretation of centuries of Midrashic and Rabbinic exegesis, along with a comprehensive commentary anthologizing the commentaries of Chazal and the traditional commentators presenting them to the English-reading public so that Torah will become accessible and understandable to serious readers for whom it had been a closed, incomprehensible book.

It is distressing that some of the hitherto available English-language translations and commentaries make use of non-Jewish and non-traditional sources to the point of disregarding Talmudic and rabbinic interpretations. This, more than anything else, demonstrates the need for such a series. Surely, Torah Jews should not find themselves in a position where their access to Torah in the commonly spoken tongue is limited to books that are not completely faithful to Masorah.

SCOPE OF THE COMMENTARY

The commentary is meant to appeal to a large cross section of people — from the early-teenage day school student to the Hebrew teacher; from the college student with a limited Hebrew background to the Kollel scholar who has neither access to all the sources in their original nor the time to investigate them individually. A serious attempt has therefore been made to bridge the very wide gap and fill the very unique individual needs of each reader.

The Book of Eichah posed a unique problem in this area because, unlike the two preceding volumes, it is not a narrative, but a series of generally unattached elegies written in poetic — at times ambiguous — Biblical Hebrew. There was an obvious need to sift the commentaries for those dealing with **פשוט**, the literal intended meaning of Jeremiah's **קינות** lamentations, together with a sampling of **דרוש**, the deeper comments.

This was undertaken with the constant realization that the work before us is a portion of *כתבי קדש* depicting the anguish of a righteous Prophet of HASHEM witnessing HASHEM's wrath — culminating in the sight of 'Mount Zion laying desolate, foxes prowling over it' [5:18] — which can be properly understood only in the light of our Sages who expounded every nuance of every word with the inner glow of *קדושה וטהרה*, the sanctity and purity necessary for proper comprehension of Holy Scripture.

Not to be ignored, however, was the generous amount of historically enlightening and tragically moving Midrashim dealing with the holocausts surrounding the Destruction of both Temples. To this end, we have included a selection of Midrashim which illustrates the background and prophetic implications of Jeremiah's grievous laments — at the same time differentiating between the First and Second *חורבנות*, Destructions.

Presently available translations of the text, in most cases, do not reflect the interpretation of the Sages. Therefore, a new, free-flowing translation of the text — not always literal, but faithful to Rabbinic interpretation — was prepared. This translation, designed to be as readable as possible, eliminated many of the 'surface difficulties' dealt with by the Midrash, Rashi, and Ibn Ezra, because their interpretations were incorporated directly into the translation.

The Talmud and Midrashim were then consulted for selections concerned with *פשוט*, the simple intended meaning of the text, which could meaningfully be incorporated into an English-language commentary.

Next, the classic commentators, Rashi, Ibn Ezra, and Alshich, as well as the major encyclopedic commentary *Lechem Dim'ah* by Rav Shmuel de Uzeda; *Akeidas Yitzchak* by Rav Yitzchak Arama; *Nachal Eshkol* by the Chidah; *Palgei Mayim* by Rav Yaakov of Lissa; *Kol Yaakov* by the Dubno Maggid, and the commentaries of Ibn Yachya and Ibn Shu'ib.

It is unfortunate that there is no commentary to Eichah by the Malbim.

HASHEM's NAME

Wherever the Hebrew Four Letter Name of God appears, it is translated: "HASHEM," i.e. 'THE Name' — the Holy Name of God. Where the Hebrew has *Elokim*, the more general and less 'personal' Name of the Deity — it is translated 'God.' Although the name of the Creator is generally written 'G-d' and not spelled out in its entirety, this Book is a portion of the Holy Scriptures and the full Four Letter Name of HASHEM appears in the Hebrew; it would have been ludicrous to abbreviate the spelling of the Name in English. *אֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל*, was translated *Eretz Yisrael* (Land of Israel). Where the word 'Israel' is found, it refers to the Jewish people in general, not always specifically in distinction with the Tribes of Judah.

A cross between the Sephardi and Ashkenazi transliteration of Hebrew words was used: Ashkenazi consonants, so to speak, with Sephardi vowels. Thus: Yisrael, not Yisroel; Yonasan not Yonatan, etc. Proper names that have become generally accepted have been retained; thus: Jeremiah, Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Zion were retained and not changed to conform to our method of transliteration. Although there are several inconsistencies, the style has generally been held throughout the work.

SEVERAL WORDS OF CAUTION

There is a conflict of conscience in any work of this nature. On the one hand, there is a crying need for Torah publications in English. Huge numbers of Torah Jews and many more who are groping their way to authentic Judaism find themselves without enough English language literature presenting a genuine Torah point of view. On the other hand, there are those equipped to study the original sources who will use the ARTSCROLL TANACH SERIES as a means to acquire instant expertise. Neither the translation nor the commentary are meant to serve as substitutes for concentrated study of the original sources. Torah scholars who make use of this book are urged to do so as an aid to more intensive learning rather than as a substitute for it.

It should be understood that many hundreds of pages of commentary are abridged and anthologized in this slim volume. Clearly, only highlights could be culled from the sources quoted. In the majority of cases, study of the full commentary in the original will yield much more than could be quoted in a work of this nature. Too, such study may lead the reader to different interpretations of the same commentary. This is natural and desirable, for the Torah greats of previous generations compared to us were, in the expression of the Sages, 'like angels compared to men or like men compared to donkeys.'

Far be it from the authors of the Overview and Commentary to pretend that they have done more than scratch the surface of the holy thought of the Torah giants.

The reader will note that the various commentaries often appear to be mutually exclusive. They are not; they complement each other just as each of the many facets of a diamond plays a part in enhancing the brilliance of a precious stone. As the Talmud says:

The school of Rabbi Ishmael taught, [The word of God is] like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces (Jeremiah 23:29). Just as a hammer [striking a rock] divides into many sparks, so, too, every word emanating from the mouth of the Holy One, blessed be He, divides into seventy interpretations (Shabbos 88b).

Every word of Torah has within it many meanings, all of them true even though they may point in different directions. Just as the myriad

sparks coming from the clang of hammer against rock all come from the same source, so, too, do many varying interpretations lie within every word of Torah.

E*ichah is the one book of the Torah that one is always reluctant to study; the one book that one always hopes will become obsolete. Yet, those who grieve with Jerusalem will one day rejoice with her. In that spirit, we wept with Jeremiah and sought to delve deep into the thoughts with which he penned the tragedy-laden words of Eichah.*

We have wept with Jerusalem; may we and all of Klal Yisrael be privileged to rejoice with her.

Rabbi Nosson Scherman / Meir Zlotowitz

Rosh Chodesh Tammuz, 5736
Brooklyn, New York

Acknowledgements

A*s this volume goes to press, it is again my honor and pleasant duty to thank those who have so graciously given of their time to encourage, inspire, read, and comment upon this work in its varying stages of preparation. It is due to their guidance and profound scholarship that this work has achieved a level worthy of the Torah public for whom it is designed:*

My father, HARAV HAGAON ARON ZLOTOWITZ, with whom I discussed many of the selections before committing them to writing. His comments benefitted me greatly; I am grateful for his paternal guidance. May he be blessed with a רפואה שלמה, and אריכות ימים ושנים together with my mother תחי:

Again, I am honored to have benefited from the counsel of a group of the most scholarly and gifted personalities on the contemporary Torah scene. They graciously allowed me unlimited access to them. They reviewed the manuscript, noting occasional discrepancies, making the most fascinating and erudite scholarly suggestions, and in general, giving freely of their phenomenal storehouses of Torah learning: HARAV DAVID FEINSTEIN, HARAV JOSEPH ELIAS, and HARAV DAVID COHEN. They have selflessly responded to my every request and gave freely the gift of time, for which I am grateful. As they have allowed me final editorial

freedom, they are absolved from responsibility for any shortcomings which may remain in the final version; that responsibility is mine alone.

A group of close, long-time friends have read portions of the manuscript checking against original sources and made many practical suggestions, many of which were incorporated into the final work: MR. DAVID H. SCHWARTZ; RABBI RONALD GREENWALD; RABBI ELI MUNK; RABBI NISSON WOLPIN; RABBI YOSEF WEINBAUM; and MRS. B. SHULMAN. The finished product is the best testimony to their sincere and productive contributions.

REB ZUNDEL BERMAN, seforim dealer has undertaken to disseminate this Torah publication to the B'nai Yeshivos for whom this work is primarily designed. His efforts are gratefully acknowledged.

A special note of thanks is due my friends at ARTSCROLL STUDIOS, Ltd., for their self-sacrificing devotion and professionalism:

REB AVI SHULMAN, as always, has provided much encouragement and guidance in the production of the series; he has seen the need and helped to ensure its wide dissemination;

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In closing, I would like to share with the readers my profound recognition that this series could not have achieved its widespread acceptance were it not for the deep involvement of HARAV NOSSON SCHERMAN, who continues to distinguish himself as a master of eloquence and clarity, presenting the most abstract Torah concepts in a manner that inspires every level of readership.

My deepest appreciation goes to my wife, מנב"ת, RACHEL, for her constant good cheer and guidance. It is mainly due to her encouragement that I was able to devote the time necessary for this project. In the merit for her love of Torah and her dedication to its teaching, may she be granted her fondest hope — that our children become talmidei chachamim.

Meir Zlotowitz

*An Overview —
Destruction and Redemption*

Destruction and Redemption

אמר ר' לוי יום שנתחתן שלמה לפרעה נכה מלך מצרים ירד מיכאל ונעץ קנה בים והעלה שלעטוט ונעשה חורש גדול וזה הוא כרך גדול שברומי. יום שהעמיד ירבעם שני עגלי זהב באו רומס ורומילס ובנו שני צריפים ברומי (ירושלמי עבודה זרה א:ב')

On the day that Solomon married the daughter of Pharaoh Necho, the king of Egypt, the angel Michael descended, and rammed a staff into the Mediterranean Sea, and surrounded it with stones and mud. It became a large forest which eventually became the great city of Rome.

On the day that King Jeraboam set up two golden calves [one in Beth El and one in Dan in order to discourage Jews from going to the Holy Temple in Jerusalem] Remus and Romulus came and built two huts in Rome.

(Yerushalmi, Avodah Zarah 1:2)

כיון שהגיעו [רבן גמליאל ורבי אלעזר בן עזריה ורבי יהושע ורבי עקיבא] להר הבית וראו שועל יוצא מבית קודש הקדשים התחילו הם בוכים ור"ע מצחק. . . . אמר להם בידוע שנבואתו של זכריה מתקיימת שאמר עוד ישבו זקנים וקנות ברחובות ירושלים. . . . (זכריה ח:ד) (מבות כב:ד)

When [Rabban Gamliel, Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah, Rabbi Yehoshua, and Rabbi Akiva] approached the Temple Mount, they saw a fox emerging from the place of the Holy of Holies. They began crying and Rabbi Akiva laughed. [In explanation for his laughter] he said to them . . . surely the prophecy of Zachariah will be fulfilled for he said, 'Old men and old women shall yet again dwell in the streets of Jerusalem . . . and the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in its streets'

(Zechariah 8:4) (Makkos 24b).

I. Time – The Torah Concept

The Cycle of Times **O**n the tenth day of Tishrei, 2449, Moshe descended from Mount Sinai with the second Tablets of the Covenant. They represented the gift of Torah and the proof that God had forgiven the sin of

the Golden Calf. That date became the eternal *Yom Kippur*, the Day of Atonement when Jewish repentance is accepted and sins forgiven.

On the fifteenth of Nissan, 2448, the climax of the redemption from Egypt was reached.

On the fifteenth of Nissan, 2448, the climax of the redemption from Egypt was reached. Jews sat in their homes eating the *Pesach* offering while its blood was a badge of faith on their doorposts. Midnight came, and the first-born of Egypt fell dead. Soon after, Pharaoh came dashing through the streets announcing that the Jews were free. That date became the eternal *זמן חירותנו*, time of our freedom — not only then, but always.

To follow the modern secular vogue and shift the date of a festival to create a conveniently long weekend would not only be distasteful, sacrilegious, and halachically impermissible. It would miss the point entirely.

Jewish religious observances are not mere memorials of ancient events. To follow the modern secular vogue and shift the date of a festival to create a conveniently long weekend would not only be distasteful, sacrilegious, and halachically impermissible. It would miss the point entirely. Emanations of holiness reach the world on the Sabbath; of forgiveness on *Yom Kippur*, of freedom on *Passover*, of Torah on *Shavuot*. Dates can be manipulated by legislatures and calendar manufacturers, but the heavenly cycle of creation is unchanging and unchangeable. The distinct and particular forms of holiness represented by each sacred and festive day can be perceived and felt, depending, of course, on the level of greatness of the individual. Even those unable to reach that plateau, can perform their observances knowing that they are significant cogs in a divine scheme, that their good deeds matter, and that, although they may not consciously feel them, the unique emanations of each day make their way into their souls.

There are times of joy and times of reflection; times like *Shavuot* when the Jew can more easily absorb Torah and times like *Pesach* when he can free himself from the yoke of slavery to material masters — whether without or within himself. God has not created the universe to be a never-changing series of days distinguished only by climate, weather, and season. No testimony to the existence of a Creator is as eloquent and meaningful as one proclaimed by a

No testimony to the existence of a Creator is as eloquent and meaningful as one proclaimed by a Jew reaching upward to new heights of belief and spiritual yearning on the Sabbath.

Jew reaching upward to new heights of belief and spiritual yearning on the Sabbath — the day which is:

אות הוא לעולם בייששית ימים עשה ה' את השמים ואת הארץ וביום השביעי שבת וינפש.

It is an eternal sign that in six days God made heaven and earth and with the Seventh Day, He ceased from work, and was refreshed (Exodus 31:16)

A Time for Testing

But there are other times, too. There are times of tragedy and sadness, times bathed in tears since the earliest days of Jewish national history.

But there are other times, too. There are times of tragedy and sadness, times bathed in tears since the earliest days of Jewish national history. The ARIZAL writes that the forty days from the beginning of Tammuz until after the Ninth of Av are times of Jewish travail, times of danger and foreboding. It was during those forty days that the twelve spies of Moshe — great men all and leaders of their people — traversed the Land of Canaan with the mission of seeing its goodness and feeling its holiness, thereby conquering the potential for tragedy inherent in those forty days. Had they but echoed the brave words of Joshua and Caleb!

אם חפץ בנו ה' והביא אתנו אל-הארץ הזאת ונתנה לנו ארץ אשר-הוא זבת חלב ודבש: אך בה' אל-תמרדו ואתם אל-תיראו את-עם הארץ כי לחמנו הם סר צלם מעליהם וה' אתנו אל-תיראם.

If HASHEM desires us, then He will bring us into this land and give it to us; a land which flows with milk and honey. Only rebel not against HASHEM, nor fear the people of the land; for they are bread for us: Their defense is departed from them, and the L-rd is with us: fear them not! (Numbers 14:8-9).

A Time of Tragedy

The failure of that eloquent appeal was a turning point in Jewish history. Had the spies not fallen short, had Joshua and Caleb prevailed, had the peo-

Had the people kept their faith in God and Moshe, then Israel, led by Moshe, would have entered its land, built the Holy Temple, and begun the reign of Messiah.

ple kept their faith in God and Moshe, then the evil potential of those forty days would have been forever destroyed. Israel, led by Moshe, would have entered its land, built the Holy Temple, and begun the reign of Messiah — the ultimate redemption for which we still long.

Instead, the spies returned on the eighth of Av with their demoralizing report and the people wept through that night.

לֹא-מָתְנוּ בָאָרֶץ מִצְרַיִם אוּ בַמִּדְבָּר הַזֶּה לֹא מָתְנוּ.
וְלָמָּה ה' מְבִיא אֹתָנוּ אֶל-הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת לָנֶפֶל
בְּחָרֹב . . . נִתְּנָה רֹאשׁ וְנִשְׁוֹבָה מִצְרֵימָה.

"Oh that we had died in the land of Egypt or that we had died in this wilderness! And wherefore does God bring us into this land to die by the sword . . . Let us appoint a chief and let us return to Egypt" (Numbers 14:2-4).

אמר ר' יוחנן אותו יום ערב תשעה באב היה,
אמר הקב"ה אתם בכיתם בכיה של חנם, אני
אקבע לכם בכיה לדורות

Rabbi Yochanan said that this day was Tishah b'Av eve. The Holy One, blessed be He, said, 'You wept in vain. I will establish it for you as a time of weeping for all generations' (Ta'anis, 28b).

Meritorious acts are left for a day of merit, and tragic acts are left for a day of guilt.

The final indignity — the plowing of the holy site where once the Holy of Holies had stood . . . where all Israel ascended yearly, seasonally, daily to become saturated with holiness — that indignity could not have occurred on any other day but Tishah b'Av.

Illustrative of Tisha b'Av's potential for tragedy is the source for the commonly known fact that the Second Holy Temple was destroyed on that day. That the First Temple was destroyed on the Ninth of Av is derived, according to the Talmud (*Ta'anis* 29a), from Scripture, but, the Talmud asks, how do we know the exact date of the Second Destruction? 'As we learned, meritorious acts are left for a day of merit, and tragic acts are left for a day of guilt' (*ibid.*). It is clear that historical evidence for the exact date of the Second Destruction was not necessary. It could be no other day than the day of eternal weeping — Tishah b'Av.

II. Tishah b'Av in History

Antiquity

On Tishah b'Av, five things occurred:

1— It was decreed upon Israel in the desert that they would not enter the Land;

2-3— Both the First and Second Holy Temples were destroyed;

4 — A great city named Betar was conquered. . . . It [Betar] fell into the hands of the Romans and they were all killed, and it was as great a tragedy as the Destruction of the Temple;

5— And in that day that was designated for punishment [emphasis mine], the wicked Turnus-Rufus plowed up the area of the Temple and its surroundings to fulfill what was said by the prophet, (Jeremiah 26:18) 'Zion will be plowed like a field' (Rambam, Hilchos Ta'anis 5:3).

The Rambam's *Mishnah Torah* is a concise, carefully worded book of law. Untold glosses have been written and laws decided because of an omission or seemingly unnecessary amplification by the Rambam. Beautiful stylist though he was, the Rambam did not indulge in rhetoric in *Mishnah Torah*. Yet, after cataloging the first four tragedies of the day that seemingly exists for the tragic, Rambam seems to allow a groan to escape from a heart overflowing with historic Jewish woe: '*And in that day that was designated for punishment,*' he says. It is as if he is telling us that the final indignity — the brazen, gratuitous sacrilege — the plowing of the holy site where once the Holy of Holies had stood, where the pillar of the Divine Presence had rested, where Abraham was ready to offer Isaac if that were God's will, where all Israel ascended yearly, seasonally, daily to become saturated with holiness — that indignity could not have occurred on any other day but Tishah b'Av.

Spain

Abarbanel spurned the 'generosity' of his monarchs. He tried to induce them to withdraw the decree. Failing, he led as many as 75,000 of his fellow Jews into a march that reached the Spanish border and crossed it on Tishah b'Av.

Nor was that the end. On Tishah b'Av, 1492, one of history's most infamous deadlines arrived. It was on that day that the Jews of Spain had to convert or leave the country — or face torture and the *auto-da-fe*. One Jew was spared from the decree — Don Yitzchok Abarbanel, the famous Torah commentator and statesman who, as finance minister of Spain, had saved profligate Ferdinand and Isabella from bankruptcy. He was too valuable to be confronted with a choice that would have forced him to leave the country. But Abarbanel spurned the 'generosity' of his monarchs. He tried to induce them to withdraw the decree. Failing, he led as many as 75,000 of his fellow Jews in a march that reached the Spanish border and crossed it on Tishah b'Av. The rabbis of the time permitted Jewish citizens to play music during the trek despite the laws forbidding such merriment during the three weeks leading up to Tishah b'Av. They ruled that it was a *mitzvah* to raise the spirits and celebrate the bravery of Jews who were ready to give up everything and to face a hostile world in hunger, disease, and poverty to sanctify the Name.

Abarbanel and his followers knew the lesson of the calendar. It was Tishah b'Av, the day that was designated for punishment.

Ferdinand and Isabella with their advisor and mentor, the fiendish Torquemada, thought they had broken Jewish spirits by forcing them out of the country that had given them 'golden eras' of Torah, wealth, and influence. They thought that they had proved to the wandering Jews that the Guardian of Israel was asleep and slumbering. They were wrong. Abarbanel and his followers knew the lesson of the calendar. It was Tishah b'Av, *the day that was designated for punishment*. God was not asleep. In His wrath He remembered His wayward children, for only God could sweep away centuries of Spanish Jewry on that tragedy-laden day.

Europe

World War I began on Tishah b'Av. To contemporary people, the tragedy of our century is the Holocaust of World War II — and, indeed, the words have still not been invented to describe the ex-

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tent of its loss and suffering. But we Jews have a different measuring rod. The Holy Temple was burned to the ground on the *tenth* of Av, but we commemorate the Ninth because it was then that the fires were set. It is impossible to minimize the events of World War II, but, viewing this tortured century in its historic sweep, we must conclude that the fires began to rage during World War I and that it was a pivotal event in shaping the trends of Jewish experience that are still unfolding.

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The German sweep into Eastern Europe beginning in 1914 uprooted Jewish communities and demolished a laboriously built tradition that took centuries to shape. Enlightenment, Bolshevism, Socialism, Nationalism, and all the other movements that characterized rebellion against Torah demands and authority, surged through the breach in the wall of tradition. Virtually all of the major rabbis in the wide swath cut by the Germans were exiled for several years. Rabbi Chaim Soloveichik, the Chofetz Chaim, and Rabbi Chaim Ozer Grodzensky were only a few of the many who were forced to leave their flocks leaderless for years at a time. Cities were devastated and tens of thousands of Jews became homeless refugees.

*All these and more
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Tisha b'Av.*

Small wonder that the devastation of the war was no less spiritual than material. The diminished stature of the rabbinate, the extreme poverty afflicting communities and yeshivos, the Bolshevik Revolution and the clamping of an Iron Curtain around the three million Jews of Russia, the decay of German political and economic life and the emergence of an evil genius named Hitler — all these and more were legacies of World War I.

In a deeper sense, just as World War II was a legacy of World War I, World War I was a legacy of earlier times — because World War I broke out on Tisha b'Av, *the day that was designated for punishment*. The heartbreak and tribulation of this century, too, are manifestations of the historic Tisha b'Av.

III. The Challenge of Greatness

The Hidden Essential

The most vital element in creation is spirituality. It is obscured by the material, interlaced with evil, disguised by statistics, logic, and data. But it is man's task on earth to cut away the earthly insulation that prevents the rays of spirituality from warming his soul. The Torah says *וְהָשְׁמִי לְעֵלָם וְנִהְיֶה לְדֹר וָדֹר*, *This is my name forever and this my memorial for all generations* (Exodus 3:15). The Talmud notes that the word *לְעֵלָם*, forever, is spelled the same way as *לְעֵלָם*, to be hidden. From this spelling, the Sages derive that *לֹא כְשֵׁאֲנִי נִכְתָּב אֲנִי נִקְרָא*, I [My Name] am not to be pronounced as I am written. Hence the law that it is forbidden to pronounce the holy four-letter name of God. Many commentators have noted that it is not only the pronunciation of the Name which is "hidden" — the very word *עוֹלָם*, universe, is derived from *עָלָם*, hidden (see *Overview*, *Megillas Esther*, *ArtScroll* edition).

The believing person will seek the finest medical care and the best hospital in the event of illness before repairing to his Tehillim and making a vow to charity in seeking divine mercy. All are ingredients in affecting the cure.

God's presence is hidden behind many veils of nature. The believing person will seek the finest medical care and the best hospital in the event of illness before repairing to his *Tehillim* and making a vow to charity in seeking divine mercy. All are ingredients in effecting the cure. The Torah commands *וְנִרְפָּא וְנִרְפָּא*, and he shall cause him to be healed (Exodus 21:19), which our Sages interpret as a divine injunction to utilize all natural means to assist the patient and help in his recovery. The doctor will use aspirin and alcohol-sponging to bring down dangerously high fever. He will use massaging and electric shock to prod a failed heart. But only when his emergency expedients are over does his essential task truly begin. What illness brought on the convulsive fever? Why did the heart stop beating? Trained in physical medicine, he seeks physical causes. He will diagnose the infection that caused the fever, the weakness that caused the heart to fail, and heal them. There his work is finished and he files his chart.

The Torah urges us to look deeper. Aspirin attacks symptoms not diseases; in a deeper sense, however, the disease, too, is but a symptom of malaise — a spiritual malaise.

The Torah urges us to look deeper. Aspirin attacks symptoms not diseases; in a deeper sense, however, the disease, too, is but a symptom of malaise — a *spiritual* malaise. Historians of the period analyze Nevuchadnezzar's conquest of Jerusalem and the Destruction of the Temple in terms of the geo-political currents of the period. The prophet Jeremiah sees more perceptively:

מה יתאונן אדם חי זכר על־חטאיו. נחפשה דרכינו ונחקרה וגשובה צד־ה'. נשא לבבנו אל־כפים אל־אל בשמים. נחנו פשענו ומרינו אתה לא סלחת.

Of what shall a living man complain? A strong man for his sins! Let us search and examine our ways and return to HASHEM. Let us lift our hearts with our hands to God in heaven: 'We have transgressed and rebelled; You have not forgiven' (Eichah 3:39-42).

Earthly destinies are divinely guided in response to man's actions. Thus it is that our Sages have urged, 'אם רואה אדם שיסורים באים עליו יפשפש במעשיו', 'If a person sees that suffering befalls him, let him examine his deeds' (*Berachos* 5a). Self-styled "enlightened" people deride religious believers who seek spiritual causes for events. Glibly they can recite long lists of cause and effect for every major event in history. Unfortunately, the learned analysts are best at predicting events *after* they happen. Intricate chains of reasoning — impressive but contradictory — are advanced to predict and guide the conduct of nations and people. The best way to dispose of their vaunted reputations is to read the prognostications of the pundits a year after they were written.

Unfortunately, the learned analysts are best at predicting events after they happen.

The Most Profound Faith

The truth is far beneath the surface: אין ערור ממית אלא החטא ממית, 'It is not the poisonous snake, but the sin that kills' (*Berachos* 33a).

Admittedly, it is enormously difficult for flesh and blood creatures in a cause-and-effect, material world to perceive that the pain, swelling, fever, and death

Admittedly, it is enormously difficult for flesh and blood creatures in a cause-and-effect, material world to perceive that the pain, swelling, fever, and death were caused by the venom of sin rather than the venom of the snake. But belief in God demands no less.

were caused by the venom of sin rather than the venom of the snake. But belief in God demands no less. Just as we know that the carpenter, not the hammer, drives in nails, we must also know that it is God, not bacteria, Who punishes. The difficulty in first accepting this concept intellectually and then translating it into a formula of life is but a manifestation of God's master plan: that His Name be hidden, that His Guiding Hand be hidden — and that mortal man be charged with the task of discerning His presence and His will.

There are few occupations where hard work and sweat are as directly related to success as farming; why then, wonders the *Chidushei haRim*, do the Sages (*Shabbos* 31a) find that אֱמוּנָה, faith in God, is typified by agriculture rather than other, more sedentary occupations? He answers that our Sages refer to the most profound form of faith. A man stranded on a desert island has no choice but to have faith. A man who subsists through random chores may also demonstrate faith that God will not forsake him. But God wants more of us. A farmer labors long and hard from dawn to dusk, doing back-breaking work under a burning sun and battling the elements throughout his career as he wrings his sustenance from the grudging earth. When his harvest is completed can he give his thanks to God, proclaiming that despite all his travail, his blessings came from God alone? That belief constitutes a vindication of man's existence, for he has cut through the layers that obscure the ultimate fact that all blessing comes from God (*Sefer haZechus*).

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Perfection —The Unchanging Goal

The redemption of Israel and, through it, all the world depends on how well man perceives and acts upon that faith.

Man is the creature who was created to cleave to Him, blessed be His Name, and he is suspended between perfection and failure He is composed of two opposites — an intelligent, pure soul and an

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earthly, murky body each of which naturally tends in its own direction i.e. the body to hedonism, and the soul to intelligence. Thus there is a war between them so that, if the soul triumphs, it will be elevated and elevate the body with it so that he will be the person who attains future perfection. But if the person allows his material body to triumph, the body will descend and the soul will descend with it. That person will be unworthy of perfection and it will be rejected by him. And this same person still has the ability to subjugate his physicality before his intellect and his soul, and to attain perfection (Derech HASHEM).

*The goals set for
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man was created.*

Man was created to attain that lofty goal; it is the purpose of creation and it remains unchanged. The goal demanded by God remains absolute: it is not enough for a person merely to be better than his neighbors. Of course, the man who overcomes the temptation of his surroundings and the blandishments of his neighbors is amply deserving of reward and he will receive it from a just and merciful God. But that is an individual matter. The goals set for creation, however, have not been diminished simply because succeeding generations fall ever shorter of the heights for which man was created. The tragic fact that the twentieth century has seen a breathtaking erosion in standards of morality — to the point where immorality is equated with “honesty” and someone upholding the eternal standards is derided as Victorian — has not changed the Torah standards of propriety, for example. Fortunately, there are no provisions to amend the divine constitution to suit the changing mores of society.

Stumble and Rise

When the first man, Adam, lost his personal war with his physical nature by sinning on the first day of his existence, his spirit was dragged down from its earlier heights. When Israel sinned by fashioning a

The goal does not change. After he falls, man must struggle to his feet again and continue the quest.

Golden Calf, and sinned again during the incident of the spies, it fell back from a spiritual summit that was only steps away from the degree of perfection for which God intended the world. *But the goal does not change.* After he falls, man must struggle to his feet again and continue the quest. Having gone down a rung on his spiritual ladder, he must climb up to his previous position — and then continue upward toward his goal.

Each of us fights his personal battle with an unforgiving foe within ourselves who seeks to drag us further down.

Can we imagine how far man has fallen since the days of Adam, Abraham, Moses, Jeremiah? Man still has his dual nature — physical and spiritual — and each of us fights his personal battle with an unforgiving foe within ourselves who seeks to drag us further down. Unbelievable though it may seem, we have it within ourselves to fight and win, thereby bringing our physical natures under the sway of our souls (*ibid.*).

Jacob had perfected himself to the point where leaving earthly life meant no more to him than removing a coat means to us.

More — we can transform our bodies into servants and adjuncts of our souls. יעקב אבינו לא מת, 'Our father Jacob did not die' (*Taanis* 5b) because he had so perfected his body that it was no contradiction whatever to his soul. 'Death' is a wrenching, painful concept only because — and to the extent that — it involves the removal of the soul from a material existence it has come to crave. The more materially lustful a person is, the less he can bear to part from this life for the holier one awaiting him. And the more spiritual his life on earth has become, the less he cares to be encumbered by his body with its demands and animal instincts. Jacob had perfected himself to the point where leaving earthly life meant no more to him than removing a coat means to us. His soul simply discarded its earthly raiment — his body — and continued essentially unchanged. 'Death' in the deeper sense simply did not exist for Jacob — hence he did not 'die' (*Resisei Loyloh*).

With every succeeding fall of the community of man, the distance to travel becomes greater.

Man can elevate himself to truly amazing heights and he has the divine pledge that heavenly assistance will be given him unsparingly should he but begin the fierce struggle upward. But with every succeeding fall of the community of man, the distance to

travel becomes greater. Can it be done? Of course it can. Israel went from slavery to Sinai in forty-nine days. The small population that emerged to Eretz Israel from exile in Babylon was soon without prophecy and with a Temple that never possessed all of the miracles, or the degree of Divine Presence of the First Temple. But it went on to reach new heights in the development of the Sinaitic Oral Law, eventually giving us the Mishnah and Talmud, the tree of wisdom which has nurtured Israel throughout its centuries of exile.

The evil inclination is hidden in the heart of man He ignores the heathen nations and provokes Israel. Abaye says that he seeks most of all to provoke Torah scholars [to sin] (*Succah* 52a).

*The prime target of
the evil inclination is
Israel.*

It would seem obvious that ordinary people should be most likely to sin and that the powers of Satan should be directed against nations of low spiritual estate. The opposite is true, however. The prime target of the evil inclination is Israel, and, within Israel, it aims its sharpest barbs at Torah scholars. Why should this be so?

*Those 'most likely to
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who do.*

Mediocrity is not dangerous. The person of average ability moves within limits relatively narrow compared to those of the unusual genius. Of course, the most important single factor in the growth of an individual is how well he utilizes the talents with which he has been endowed. It is all too well known that those 'most likely to succeed' are not usually the ones who do. Nevertheless, the potential of the average — even the above average person — is nowhere near that of the genius.

Those individuals and that nation, Israel, which possess spiritual greatness to a much higher extent than others, become the natural target of the forces of evil. Satan cannot countenance the ascendancy of good. The innocuous and mediocre do not frighten him; the distinctive and outstanding do, for they possess the potential to begin inching upward to the spiritual summit of human perfection.

IV. A River of Tears

The Devotion of Your Youth

Israel, in its youth as a nation, demonstrated a yearning for spiritual greatness that left it with spiritual reservoirs that sustain it throughout its history.

כֹּה אָמַר ה' וְזָכַרְתִּי לָךְ חֶסֶד וְנִירוֹיֶךָ אֲהַבָּת
בְּלִילִיתֶיךָ, לְקִתְךָ אֲחֶרֶי בְּמִדְבָּר בְּאֶרֶץ לֹא
וְרוּצָה. קִדַּשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל לָהּ.

Thus says HASHEM: I remember for your sake the devotion of your youth, your love as a bride, when you went after Me in the wilderness, in an unsown land. Israel is holy to HASHEM (Jeremiah 2:2-3).

Jeremiah uttered that prophecy on the threshold of the Destruction. He was speaking to a Jewish nation that was already in an advanced stage of decay. Still, his words are an unsurpassed praise of God's beloved nation. Indeed, the devotion of Israel in its youth, its love as the 'bride' of God refer to the weeks surrounding the giving of the Law at Mount Sinai when it was as yet unsullied by national sin — after it expressed its total belief in God at the splitting of the sea and before it worshipped the Golden Calf. From here we see the extreme importance of a sound foundation in youth for every person. Israel's youth created eternal memories of dedication, goodness, and love — memories that God cherished in the midst of Israel's most grievous sins nearly a thousand years later. So, too, an individual's youth creates the basis for a lifetime of devotion and purity — a basis strong enough to be remembered and rewarded even after a personal fall (*ARIZAL*).

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The Attack Upon Greatness

Precisely because Israel was so great, however, it became a target of the blandishments of Satan.

אָנִי אָמַרְתִּי אֱלֹהִים אַתֶּם, וּבְנֵי עֲלִיוֹן בְּלָבֶם.
I had said: You are angels, all of you sons of the most high, nevertheless you shall die like a man (Psalms 82:6-7).

*Had all gone well, it
would have
continued into the
Holy Land, built the
Holy Temple, and
established the
eternal kingdom.*

When Israel accepted the Torah, it became like a nation of angels, rising above the limitations of ordinary human beings. Had it been perfect and without blemish, no evil could have attached to it; perfection, by definition, does not admit to evil, the greatest imperfection. Israel became angelic, it was *on its way* to perfection for, had all gone well, it would have continued into the Holy Land, built the Holy Temple, and established the eternal kingdom where all the world would have acknowledged that HASHEM is King over the entire world, He is One and that His Name is One. But they were not yet perfect. And for that reason, imperfection in the form of sin could attach itself to them. Because they were so far above the human norm, Satan had to attack them. And because they had the capacity to rise so high, they also had the capacity to fall so low (*Maharal*).

Three Oppor- tunities

There were three times when God's goal for creation was within reach — when Adam was created, when Israel accepted the Torah, and when the spies were dispatched to Eretz Israel. Each time the forces of evil launched an assault to prevent the final realization of the ultimate good: Adam ate the fruit of the tree of knowledge; less than six weeks after Sinai, Jews danced around a Golden Calf; and spies came back with tales that brought vain tears on a night which remained aflood in tears throughout Jewish history (*Sefer haZechus*).

Trading Favor for Tears

The Sages say that one of the unique forms of affection in the world is the love people feel for their native land and their home town (*Sotah* 47a). This is a sentiment that is amply demonstrated in all places and at all times. One shudders to think of the countless millions of lives that have been expended for the sake of a homeland. One is inspired by the sacrifices people make to protect and beautify the piece of real estate they call home. In Biblical Hebrew, this rare form of love is expressed as **מציאת**

*Eyes see, minds
record, hearts love —
but the eyes are the
first conduits for
good and for evil.*

חֵן בְּעֵינַיִם, finding favor in one's eyes. Eyes see, minds record, hearts love — but the eyes are the first conduits for good and for evil.

Israel wanted to see its land. Moshe chose twelve great men to be their agents; they would spy out the land for their brethren. The eyes of the spies would be the eyes of the people. They were to see its beauty, abundance, and — above all — its holiness. Their eyes and the eyes of the people should have longed for the land pledged to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the land for which they and their fathers and grandfathers longed in Egypt, the land to which God gives His special attention and blessing.

*They were
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the eyes of God.*

Instead, the spies came back with a frightening report. They went and toured and looked — and saw nothing. Their eyes were beclouded by the layers of עֲלֻמִּים, the obscurities of natural existence. They were frightened of warriors and fortifications, and failed to see that the causes of their dread were but toy soldiers and matchsticks in the eyes of God. They saw burials and thought that the land killed its inhabitants, but they failed to see that God diverted the attention of the Canaanites from the Jewish spies by causing deaths among them.

They delivered their chilling report. Jewish eyes that should have welled with love for the land, *their* land, shed tears of remorse and sorrow that they had not remained in Egypt rather than journey across the desert to a land they didn't want badly enough (*Maharal, Sefer haZechus*).

An Oppor- tunity Lost

By so doing they made a millennia-long detour in the course of Jewish history. God had withdrawn His people from Egypt, but that was only the beginning. The Exodus was to culminate with entry into Eretz Israel after a relatively brief sojourn in the Desert of Sinai to receive the Tablets of the Law. Instead, Israel refused, with tearful eyes, to enter the Promised Land. Because God swore that that generation would not be privileged to enter the Land, the eventual conquest of Eretz Israel did not have the same per-

Because God swore that that generation would not be privileged to enter the Land, the eventual conquest of Eretz Israel did not have the same permanence as the Exodus. It was an opportunity lost.

Had they trusted in God and followed Moshe, the entire nation would have gone into Eretz Israel led by him.

manence as the Exodus. It was an opportunity lost, a legacy drowned in vain tears.

Had they trusted in God and followed Moshe, the entire nation would have gone into Eretz Israel *led by him*. The Holy Temple would have been built, never to be destroyed; the people would have sat, every man under his grape vine and under his fig tree, never to be exiled; and the still longed for, final redemption under God's chosen anointed would have come. But they didn't trust and they didn't obey. So the exodus from Egypt remained eternal, but the entry into the Land was to be transitory.

And because the coming to Eretz Israel no longer had the permanence it should have had, Israel would find itself exiled in the future.

וַיִּמָּאֲסוּ בְּאֶרֶץ חֲמֹדָה, לֹא־הִאֱמִינוּ לְדָבָרוֹ.
וַיִּרְגְּנוּ בְּאֶהְלֵיהֶם, לֹא שָׁמְעוּ בְּקוֹל יְהוָה. וַיִּשָּׂא
יְדוֹ לָהֶם, לְהַפִּיל אוֹתָם בַּמִּדְבָּר. וּלְהַפִּיל זֶרְעָם
בְּגוֹיִם, וּלְזָרוּתָם בְּאֶרְצוֹת.

They despised the pleasant land, they believed not his word: but murmured in their tents and did not hearken to the voice of HASHEM. Therefore He lifted up His hand against them, swearing to overthrow them in the wilderness: to cast out their seed also among the nations and to scatter them in the lands (Psalms 106:24-27).

One night of vain, useless, senseless weeping resulted in an ocean of tears that still floods the path of Jewish history thirty-three centuries later (Maharal).

V. Sources of Punishment

Searching for Roots

שלשה נתנבאו בלשון איכה: משה, ישעיה, וירמיה. משה אמר איכה אשא לבדי, ישעיה אמר איכה היתה לזונה קריה נאמנה, וירמיה אמר איכה ישבה בדד. משה ראה את ישראל בכבודם ובשלוותם, ישעיה ראה אותם בפחוזותם, ירמיה ראה אותם בניוולם.

Three prophesied with the expression איכה, 'Alas!' 'How!' — Moshe, Isaiah, and Jeremiah. Moshe said, 'How can I alone bear. . .' (Deut. 1:12). Isaiah said, 'How is the faithful city become a harlot' (Isaiah 1:21). And Jeremiah said, 'Alas! She sits alone' (Eichah 1:1). Moshe saw Israel in its glory and tranquility; Isaiah saw them in their impetuosity, and Jeremiah saw them in their disgrace (Eichah Rabbah).

The sweep of history is often lost on people. We tend to look for today's roots in the events of yesterday, failing to realize that individuals, and certainly nations, are molded over a period of generations and centuries. Can someone pretend to understand today's Sephardic Jews without understanding nineteenth century Yemen and Morocco? Or understand Ashkenazic Jews without knowing the Pale of Settlement and Austro-Hungarian Empire? As we have seen, the human condition is based on the struggle to attain a goal; each succeeding slippage increases the distance and lengthens the spiritual ground which must be covered simply to return to an earlier estate. We read of holy and illustrious ancestors, of grandfathers and grandmothers who may have been unlearned but to whom faith in God was as real as our faith in the gush of water that follows a turn of the faucet; of great Torah scholars who navigated the Sea of Talmud in intellectual ocean liners while we thrash about in rowboats with broken oars; of holy men of the spirit whose faces shone like the noontime sun. Where are their equals today? And how much of our fall is due to Napoleon's Emancipation, to the Jewish immigration to America to find the gold strewn about on treifah streets,' to Jewish intelligentsia and movements that thought the millennium could be found outside of Torah life? How many mistaken paths must we retrace to return to the world of the Chasam Sofer and Rabbi Akiva Eiger, of the Baal Shem Tov and the Vilna Gaon? Let no one be deluded; the roots

The human condition is based on the struggle to attain a goal; each succeeding slippage increases the distance and lengthens the spiritual ground which must be covered simply to return to an earlier estate.

How many mistaken paths must we retrace to return to the world of Chasam Sofer and Rabbi Akiva Eiger, of the Baal Shem Tov and the Vilna Gaon?

of today reach deep, deep into the past. And so it always was.

Ultimately much of our history — much more than we realize — was written on the sands of Sinai in the days of our national youth.

אַבְתֵּינוּ חָטְאוּ וְאֵינָם נִאֶנְחָנוּ עֲוֹנוֹתֵיהֶם סָבְלוּ

Our fathers have sinned and are no more, and we have suffered for their iniquities. (Eichah 5:7).

The expression חָטָא refers to an unintentional sin while עָוֹן refers to a premeditated transgression. Jeremiah puts it very succinctly: our forefathers may have sinned unintentionally, but they set a course of action in motion with the result that we, their descendants, bear the burden of *premeditated* sins. Had the Jews in the desert but been worthy of the goal set for them, we would be spared the travail of exile. Had Jewish history been written differently two centuries ago, today's Jewish world would be unrecognizable; had the flood of Jewish immigration to America in the last quarter of the nineteenth century built yeshivos, three generations of Jewish youth would have been saved for Torah. The sins of a century ago were caused by misguided policies and lack of foresight, but they festered and grew into mammoth barriers blocking the development of Torah life.

Had the flood of Jewish immigration to America in the last quarter of the nineteenth century built yeshivos, three generations of Jewish youth would have been saved for Torah.

**Foresaking
a
Teacher**

One of the roots of present Jewish life extends deep into history, to the day when Jethro suggested that Moshe appoint leaders of tens, hundreds, and thousands to assist him. Moshe would no longer be forced to sit all day judging, advising, and mediating between God and Israel. The idea was surely logical and sound. Moshe himself had said, 'I am not able to bear you myself alone. . . . How can I myself alone bear your care and your burden and your strife?' (Deut. 1:9, 12). Moshe presented the proposal to the Jews and they answered, 'The thing which you have spoken is good for us to do' (ibid 14).

An intelligent answer, surely. But it was one of

those unintentional sins that would bear poisoned fruit for thousands of years to come.

The Sifri includes that exchange between Moshe and the people as an important element of the reproach with which he began the Book of Deuteronomy.

'You should have answered, "Moshe, our teacher, from whom is it better to learn, from you or from your student? Isn't it better to learn from you?"' (Rashi *ibid*).

In dispensing with the direct, face-to-face teaching of Moshe, the people deprived themselves of his teaching and his personality and influence.

In accepting the simple, logical course of dispensing with the direct, face-to-face teaching of Moshe, the people deprived themselves of his teaching and his personality and his influence. How much this affected their development during the forty years in the desert, no human being can ever know. Would the people have responded to the report of the spies with such bitter tears had they not been insulated from the teaching and training of Moshe?

But they accepted Jethro's plan and, forty years later, Moshe reproached them for it. By their acceptance they showed that, because they did not appreciate the greatness of Moshe, they were not worthy of his teaching. It is not idle coincidence that only three prophets use the word *איכה*, *How? Alas!* The three prophecies are connected. Because Moshe could not bear their burdens alone — and the people allowed those burdens to be shifted from him! — Israel showed itself to be unready for the degree of greatness that would have been theirs had they insisted that only Moshe should continue as their teacher. The result was a stunted spiritual growth and the eventual deterioration into the harlot of Isaiah's prophecy and the lonely, destitute widow of Jeremiah's prophecy (*S'fas Emes*).

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Seeds of its Enemies

Just as a shortcoming of Israel mushroomed into a flaw that resulted in its national downfall, so, too, misdeeds of Israel became the seeds of its enemies.

On the day that Solomon married the daughter of Pharaoh Necho, the king of

Egypt, the angel Michael descended, and rammed a staff into the Mediterranean Sea, and surrounded it with stones and mud. It became a large forest which eventually became the great city of Rome.

On the day that King Jeraboam set up two golden calves [one in Beth El and one in Dan in order to discourage Jews from going to the Holy Temple in Jerusalem] Remus and Romulus came and built two huts in Rome (Yerushalmi, Avodah Zarah 1:2).

The main point of the two stories, of course, is not the historical record of how Rome, as a piece of real estate, came into existence, or when the first two shacks of the eventual Roman Empire came into being. The Talmud is concerned with telling us *why* Rome came into being — and why it went on to destroy the Second Temple and throw Israel into an exile that has existed for over nineteen centuries.

Leaders are intimately bound together with their people; a lack of faith on the part of the people can drag their leaders down with them. Thus it was that the spies of Moshe — all of whom were great men — saw their faith and stature crumble (*Gur Aryeh*).

A lack of faith on the part of the people can drag their leaders down with them.

One of the prime rules in understanding the story of *Tanach* is that the people in those early, great spiritual times were judged according to standards infinitely higher than ours (see Overview, Megillas Ruth). Their sins were sins by *their* standards, not by ours. Nevertheless, their lapses deeply affected the history of succeeding generations.

King Solomon, by marrying an Egyptian princess exhibited a personal weakness that was reflective of the nation.

King Jeraboam set up his two golden calves. His motives were purely political: were Jews to continuously travel from his land of the Ten Tribes to the Holy Temple in Jerusalem with their offerings, then Jeraboam's legitimacy as a rebel king could not be assured. To safeguard his monarchy, he attempted to destroy the spiritual life of his people. By

countenancing such a brazen act, the people as well as their king showed that they had within themselves germs of unworthiness.

Solomon and Jeroboam, by their deeds, acted out fatal flaws in their people. Because the nation of Israel was flawed, a Roman nation was created. Because Israel did not heed its prophets and sages, Rome ascended to world power and became the tool to destroy Israel.

VI. Causes of Destruction

The First Temple

מקדש ראשון מפני מה חרב? מפני שהיו בה ג' דברים, עבודה זרה, גילוי עריות, ושפיכות דמים. . . . אבל מקדש שני שאנו בקיאים בהם שהיו עוסקים בתורה ובמצוות ובגמילות חסדים אמאי אחרב? מפני שנאת חנם שהיתה ביניהם.

Why was the First Temple destroyed? Because during its period there were three sins: idolatry, immorality, and bloodshed. . . . But the Second Temple — we know that they studied Torah, performed the commandments, and did kind deeds — why was it destroyed? Because there was purposeless hatred among them. (Yoma 9b).

*One could ascend
the Temple Mount
and see miracles by
the minute.*

During the period of the *First Temple*, the Divine presence was manifest among Jews. Holiness and prophecy were everywhere. One could ascend the Temple Mount and see miracles by the minute: the pillar of God's glory, heavenly fire, the smoke of the incense, and more. The land could not be destroyed and its people exiled until the Divine Presence removed itself from the people.

The three grievous sins, idolatry, immorality, and murder, are the epitome of impurity (*Shavuot 7b*). When the people were sullied by those sins, they could no longer be the home of divinity; God's

Without the Divine Presence brought by the deeds of the people, even a Holy Temple becomes degraded until it is but an example of glorious architecture.

Presence deserted them. Being so denuded of their holy protection, they could fall prey to Nebuchadnezzar — they and their Temple. Without the Divine Presence brought by the deeds of the people, even a Holy Temple becomes degraded until it is but an example of glorious architecture. Brilliant gold and glistening silver in the service of God are beautiful; devoid of Godliness, they are merely ostentatious.

Satan waited until he saw chinks in their spiritual armor; then he descended to attack the wellsprings of holiness.

As we have seen, the forces of evil cannot tolerate too great a deviation from the norm. Eretz Israel during the time of the First Temple was a country perched on dizzying heights of holiness. Satan waited until he saw chinks in their spiritual armor; then he descended to attack the wellsprings of holiness by enticing its bearers with the sins that represent the basest forms of impurity (*Maharal*).

The True Source

A statement of our Sages gives us a piercing insight into the nature of people and their reaction to sin.

לא עבדו ישראל עבודה זרה אלא להתיר להם עריות בפרהסיא

Israel worshipped idols only as a means to permit itself public immorality (Sanhedrin 63b).

Normal human self-respect dictates that people seek to defend their actions. They may cite existentialism, the 'new' morality, the law of the jungle or whatever other 'philosophy' is currently fashionable — but there will always be some rationalization.

Most decent people remember the first time they committed a particular sin. There was a feeling of remorse and emptiness.

Rabbi Israel Salanter once quoted the Talmudic statement *עבר אדם עבירה ושנה בה נעשית לו כהיתר*, *If someone commits a sin and then repeats it, he begins to consider it like a permitted act (Yoma 86b)*. 'What if he commits the sin a third time?' asked Rabbi Israel. 'Then, in the eyes of the sinner it becomes a *mitzvah* to do it again!' Master student of human nature that he was, Rabbi Israel Salanter knew that the urge for self-justification is overpowering. Most decent people remember the first time they committed a particular sin. There was a feeling of remorse

and emptiness. Their mouths went dry and they felt degraded, and determined that they would never do it again. If it happens a second time, the feeling is different. It may bring no more than a shrug of the shoulders and the unspoken feeling that it wasn't so terrible, after all. The third time? Or the fourth? Then it becomes one more facet of normal behavior, and pride almost dictates that it be continued — because the transgressor has already managed to justify himself in his own mind.

The Jewish religion imposed high standards of behavior — but the idols winked at immorality, so idolators flourished.

The nation of Israel in the period of the First Temple began to experience an uncontrollable urge for immorality. That the flesh is weak is not a new phenomenon. But how does one justify such behavior — especially by the nation of Torah, the nation that knew full well that God equates morality with holiness (*Vayikra Rabbah*)? We have seen what secular society has done when faced with this dilemma in the second half of the twentieth century; it has ridiculed shame and morality as symptoms of dishonesty and hypocrisy. It has transformed the word love from a sublime emotion into a synonym for animalism. Jews smitten with lust during the Temple period turned to idols to legitimate their drives. The Jewish religion imposed high standards of behavior — but the idols winked at immorality, so idolators flourished. When righteous people attempted to bar their path, the idolators even resorted to murder. So the three cardinal sins — all born of lust — infiltrated Jewish holiness with impurity, driving the Divine Presence from the Land and resulting in the Destruction and exile (*Michtav Me'Eliyahu*).

The Second Temple

The Temple served as the symbol of their unity because they brought all offerings to the same place and used the same priests.

During the time of the *Second Temple*, the Divine Presence did not rest on the Land and on the people as it did during the First. There was no prophecy, no Holy Ark in the Temple, the lack of as many miracles as in the First Temple. The strength of the nation during that period was that it was united. God could still say 'Who is like My people Israel, *one* nation on earth.' The Temple served as the symbol of their unity because they brought all offerings to the same

place and used the same priests. When they descended to petty bickering and hatred, they forfeited their claim to divine protection — unity. Fragile though their statehood was, it was still possible only by the grace of God. When they lost the cause of that grace, they lost their land and their Temple, and began an agonizing exile amid an orgy of Roman barbarity (*Maharal*).

VII. The Divine Presence

*Were we to truly
perceive the holiness
of the Divine
Presence, all need
for explanation
would evaporate.*

Shechina, the Divine Presence, and *Shechinta b'Galusa*, the Divine Presence in exile, are familiar; but little understood phrases. In truth, it is virtually impossible for us to understand them fully, because our generation is so divorced from the tangible aspects of holiness. And, if we go a step further, were we to truly perceive the holiness of the Divine Presence, all need for explanation would evaporate. We try to understand the laws governing vision and perception, but we do not question their existence. We do not question the existence of energy and its sources, and the possibility of converting fuels into energy.

*The Divine Presence
hovered over the
Temple with an
intensity that could
be felt by anyone
attuned to holiness.*

The King of Khazars asked the Jewish wise man to explain the need for offerings. Before going on to a philosophical exposition, the wise man answered very pragmatically: When a Jew went to the Temple with his offering, he saw that, as a result of his performance of the various commandments, a heavenly fire remained on the altar, a pillar-like holy cloud stood over the Holy of Holies, and the Divine Presence hovered over the Temple with an intensity that could be felt by anyone attuned to holiness. Anyone who brought an offering, saw its effects with his eyes, and felt them with his soul, could not question the efficacy of what he had done — it was a fact (*Kuzari*).

But we don't see that sort of open affirmation of the Divine Presence — therefore, we wonder. And that is precisely what is meant by the *Exile* of the Divine Presence.

The Absence of Shechinah

*No matter how dark
the night of exile,
the spark still glows,
however faintly,
deep within the
recesses of his being.*

To the extent that a Jewish heart beats in tune with the existence of God, to the extent that a Jew's behavior testifies to the fact that he is a member of God's chosen people — the Divine Presence rests upon that person. A spark of holiness glows within every Jewish heart. No matter how dark the night of exile and no matter how indistinguishable a Jew may be from the surrounding peoples with whom he has chosen to assimilate, the spark still glows, however faintly, deep within the recesses of his being. That the spark will never die is a divine promise.

Shechinah, the Divine Presence, is always there. In some — the outstanding *talmidei chachamim* and *tzaddikim* — it is visible. No person of sensitivity can observe the greatest people Israel possesses and fail to see that, in the beautiful words of the *Chazon Ish*:

He walks among people and, to one who judges by outward appearances, seems like an ordinary human being. But! — in truth he is an angel who dwells among mortal men and who lives a lofty life, exalted above any human ability to bless and praise (Collected Letters I).

In others it is dormant, apparently dead. The keenest observer cannot see its glow behind myriad layers of sin and apathy. When that happens, the Divine Presence is in exile.

*God Himself is
never in exile . . . It
is His Presence
which is in exile.*

God *Himself* is never in exile — לֹא הָאָרֶץ וּמִלֹּאָהּ לֵה' תָּכֵל וְיוֹשְׁבֵי בָהּ The earth is HASHEM's and the fullness thereof, the earth and all who dwelt therein (Psalms 24:1). It is His Presence which is in exile, because it is *we* who, in our lives, our hearts, our constant behavior, fail to demonstrate that we are His abodes on earth.

When a Jew lives according to the dictates of Torah, the divine spark within him becomes a holy conflagration that illuminates every facet of his life

all the way down to his behavior on either side of a grocery store counter. There is no differentiation between "religious" and "secular" in Jewish life. Every area is regulated by Torah Law and, because it is, every area is religious and Godly. When that happens, the Divine Presence is not in exile; it is increasingly in evidence in a glory that grows and grows until it reaches the level of Adam before his sin, of Israel at Sinai, of Israel awaiting the spies who could have brought the final redemption had they but said. 'The Land is very, very good.'

*As the Divine
Presence recedes
further and further,
a person can reach
the level where he
would die were it not
for the divine
assurance that no
spark is ever
completely
extinguished within
a Jew.*

But when a Jew allows this world to becloud his vision, when he sins once, twice, three times until he rationalizes his sin into a *mitzvah*, the spark within him loses its luster as it recedes behind layer upon layer of material insulation. The Divine Presence becomes hidden not only from outsiders, but from the very bearer of the spark. As it recedes further and further, a person can reach the level where he can no longer respond to holiness, where he can no longer recognize it, where his spark is so heavily insulated that its light cannot escape the deepest recesses of the heart, and would die were it not for the divine assurance that no spark is ever completely extinguished within a Jew.

Indeed, the Divine Presence depends on the Jew, himself. The more a Jew makes himself worthy of it, the more it rests upon him — and the more clearly he sees it thus spurring him onward to new spiritual achievements resulting in yet a more intense Divine Presence. The opposite is also true. As a Jew refuses to see the light, it recedes from him until it remains but a spark locked in an uncomprehending heart.

When the Exile of the Divine Presence extends throughout the nation, Destruction has taken place. And when the spiritual destruction of the nation is a manifest fact, the Destruction of the Temple has already occurred in the truest sense. The crumbling of its wood and stones is but an inevitable anticlimax (*Michtav m'Eliyahu*).

**A Lesson
— Not
Punishment**

The layers covering the spark are physical and material. Israel's idolatry was a rationalization for its lust (see above). Surely none but the very greatest recognized it at the time, and they, even Jeremiah himself, were derided for their temerity. Had it not been for the words of our Sages — words that have the force and validity of Torah itself — we would never know the truth. Instead of moaning 'Alas! She sits alone!' — and weeping over Zion in her moral and spiritual humiliation, we might well indulge in sophistries about the conflicting 'philosophies' of those times. Our disputations might well sound like a random conversation about the always shifting mores and fads of life. Instead, the piercing insight of the Sages reveals how much human rebellion against Torah, although defended with paper castles of intellectual fortification — is but another instance of an old malaise: Israel worshipped idols only to permit itself public immorality (*Sanhedrin 63b*).

God looks and longs for His Presence to be released from its exile. How can the material covers be stripped away? By showing us that earthly comfort is but an enticing mirage.

Gratification of the senses, the 'good' things of life, excess comfort, luxurious living — all these extraneous influences cover the heavenly light in every Jewish heart. God looks and longs for His Presence to be released from its exile. How can the material covers be stripped away? By showing us that earthly comfort is but an enticing mirage. If God shows us that our faith in accumulation of wealth is baseless, then we may realize that wealth is His and he has entrusted it to us for use as His Torah decrees. If God shows us that our faith in the guarantees of great powers leaves us no safer, that security lies not at the base of a gun barrel, then we may realize that only God is the Protector of Israel and that we have within us the spark that lights the way to find Him.

**Choosing
to
See**

So God brings suffering upon individuals and upon the nation. Not to punish in the sense that an angry parent raps knuckles or an angry teacher takes away recess — God's wrath is not assuaged by petty revenge. The loving parent and wise teacher choose their chastisements carefully, not to avenge, but to guide and teach and show the proper way. A man

feeling pain may turn to God or he may turn to more expensive doctors and more exotic drugs. A nation suffering setbacks may mend its tattered morality, or increase its appropriations for defense. A country engaged in a disastrous, losing foreign adventure may admit its mistake and pull back, or pour more and more blood and treasure into a doomed cause.

God guarantees only that we can see the truth if we are willing to make the effort.

God gives us no guarantee that His afflictions will make us see the light. He has created a world of free choice, a condition that puts upon us the responsibility to see the truth and not cover it with yet another layer of self-imposed deception. God guarantees only that we *can* see the truth if we are willing to make the effort — not an easy task — to see it.

Some people see the light and repent at the first suggestion of suffering because they recognize its source and know that it is a divine gift of perspective. Others prefer to curse their fate, take philosophical aspirins, and frantically throw cover upon cover lest the spark of truth emerge from its exile and cast its piercing light upon the sham of pointless striving after falsehood.

VIII. Light from the Darkness

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹקִים לְיִשְׂרָאֵל בְּמַרְאֵת הַלַּיְלָה

And God spoke to Israel in the visions of the night (Genesis 46:2).

The Evening Prayer We do not find God speaking to Abraham or Isaac in a vision of the night, only to Jacob. At that moment, Jacob was poised to leave the Promised Land to begin a long, long Egyptian exile. Jacob was afraid, and well he might be, because by the time the exile ended his children had fallen to the forty-ninth level of impurity until they were barely distinguishable from the Egyptians.

The night when hope was enveloped in darkness was about to begin, so God came to Jacob *'in the vi-*

Jacob, the patriarch of exile, originated Arvis, the Evening Service, to show his children that exile, evening, is epilogue to one day and prologue to another.

sions of the night' to show him that Jews might be exiled from their land, but they could never be exiled from their God. גלו לבבל שכינה עמם. *When they were exiled to Babylon, the Divine Presence was with them* (Megillah 29a). Therefore, Jacob, the patriarch of exile, originated Arvis, the Evening Service, to show his children that exile, evening, is epilogue to one day and prologue to another.

The Evening Service represents the burning of the offerings in the Temple, a service that could be concluded at night only if the rest of the service had been done during the previous day. This is the eternal lesson that, by continuing its loyalty to Torah which began in the golden eras, the daylight of our history, we maintain our bond with God no matter how dark the night (*Meshech Chochmoh*).

But there is more.

אֵל תִּשְׁמַחֵנִי אֵיבֹתִי לִי כִי נִפְלֵיתִי קָמְתִי כִי אֲשֻׁב
בְּחֹשֶׁךְ ה' אֹר לִי

Rejoice not against me, my enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness HASHEM shall be a light to me (Michah 7:8).

אֶלְמָלָא נִפְלֵיתִי לֹא קָמְתִי אֶלְמָלָא יִשְׁבַּתִּי בְּחֹשֶׁךְ
לֹא הָיָה אֹר לִי

Had I not fallen, I could not have arisen; had I not sat in the darkness, He would not have been a light for me (Midrash Tehillim 22).

As we have seen (Overview I), there are special qualities in various times during the year. The forty days beginning with Rosh Chodesh Tammuz, and especially Tisha b'Av, are times of enormous tragedy and catastrophe. But the very tragedy holds within it the seeds of redemption. 'From the very fall will come the arising' — no one can rise up without falling first. 'From the very darkness will come the light' — the darkest, most hopeless part of the night precedes the dawn. Dark it is, but it is prelude to the sunrise. כִּיּוֹן שְׁחָרַב בֵּית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ נִוְלַד הַמָּשִׁיחַ. *From the moment the Temple was destroyed, Mashiach was born* (Midrash Abba Gorion).

Born on Tisha b'Av

With the Destruction, God stripped away the layers of materialism. It *could* have been — should have been — the blaze of light that forced open eyes blinded to the Divine Presence. Tradition tells us that Mashiach's birthdate is Tisha b'Av. This is because the bleakest tragedy holds within it the lesson that brings redemption, and so it contains the seeds of redemption. Why did Moshe send the spies to see the good during the forty days best calculated to serve the purposes of evil? Because the seeds of the greatest good are buried in the greatest evil.

Mediocrity is limited, and so it is not dangerous. Evil seeks the days with the greatest potential for good, therefore it has lodged in Tisha b'Av; but the potential of greatness is still there and that is why Tisha b'Av will become the gladdest of festive days when Mashiach brings the world back to and beyond the levels of Adam and Israel in the desert.

Tisha b'Av will become the gladdest of festive days when Mashiach brings the world back to and beyond the levels of Adam and Israel in the desert.

When the work of creation began, the newly born universe was *void and formless with darkness on the face of the deep* וְרוּחַ הַמְּשִׁיחַ מְרַחֶפֶת עַל פְּנֵי הַמַּיִם *and the spirit of God moved over the surface of the waters* (Gen. 1:2).

The spirit of God moving. . . was the spirit of Mashiach (Breishis Rabba 2:5). The world was void and formless — darkness and evil — without, as yet, the saving grace of light and life. But the spirit of Mashiach already existed. The holiest of men, the very end purpose of creation, may exist in the formless void of darkness and disaster. The lower and more degraded a time, a place, a people, the greater the divine sparks that lay there buried and hidden — ready to emerge when human beings tear away the veils and reveal it. (*Bais Aharon*).

The lower and more degraded a time, a place, a people, the greater the divine sparks that lay there buried and hidden.

Tears and Laughter

כִּיּוֹן שֶׁהִגִּיעוּ [רַבֵּן גַּמְלִיאֵל וְרַבִּי אֱלֵעָזָר בֶּן עֲזַרְיָה וְרַבִּי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ וְרַבִּי עֲקִיבָא] לַהֲרַג הַבֵּית וְרָאוּ שׁוֹעַל יוֹצֵא מִבֵּית קוֹדֶשׁ הַתְּחִילוּ הֵם בּוֹכִים וְרִ"ע מִצַּחֲקָם . . . אָמַר לָהֶם בִּידוּעַ

שנבואתו של זכריה מתקיימת שאמר עוד ישובו
זקנים וזקנות ברחובות ירושלים

When [Rabban Gamliel, Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah, Rabbi Yehoshua, and Rabbi Akiva] approached the Temple Mount, they saw a fox emerging from the place of the Holy of Holies. They began crying and Rabbi Akiva laughed. [In explanation for his laughter] he said to them . . . surely the prophecy of Zachariah will be fulfilled for he said, 'Old men and old women shall yet again dwell in the streets of Jerusalem . . . and the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in its streets' (Zechariah 8:4) (Makkos 24b).

Rabbi Akiva's colleagues saw one tragedy after another. They wept. How could one help but weep when seeing the holy places of Israel transformed into playgrounds for the iniquitous, when seeing the Temple Mount and the Holy of Holies become a foxes' den?

Rabbi Akiva laughed. He saw what they saw, but he also saw what they didn't see. The greater the tragedy, the greater the future rejoicing. Could God atone so great a degradation with a minor return? Could so great a destruction give way to mere shacks and subsistence?

No, by the very depth of the tragedy, God showed how great would be the future. Rabbi Akiva laughed with confident joy. Jews don't live in the present. Jews grasp the past as road maps of the future. We pray at night because we are continuing the divine service of the day and because we know that darkness gives birth to light – and the bleaker the darkness the more brilliant the light. (Maharal, Bais Aharon).

Jews don't live in the present. Jews grasp the past as road maps of the future

Rise Up נָפְלָה לֹא תוֹסִיף קוֹם בְּתוֹלַת יִשְׂרָאֵל, *The maiden of Israel is fallen; she shall no more rise (Amos 5:2).*

A tragic, frightening prophecy.

In Eretz Israel, they punctuated the verse differently and read it this way:

נִפְלָה וְלֹא תִקָּף, *She has fallen, she shall not fall again.* קוּם בְּתוּלַת יִשְׂרָאֵל. *Rise up, oh maiden of Israel! (Berachos 4b).*

After more than nineteen centuries of fall, may *Mashiach*, born on Tisha b'Av, finally come to redeem the buried holiness of this day and say to us, 'You have fallen enough! Rise up, oh maiden of Israel.'

Rabbi Nosson Scherman

(See: 'A Chronology of Churban,' page 142)

לזכר נשמת

איש תם וישר, עניו ובעל חסד למופת, אשר שם כחותיו
להחזיק בני תורה ונקשר אתם בעבותות אהבת נצח.
פיו פתח בחכמה ותורת חסד על לשונו.
הנחיל למאות ואלפים תלמידים נחלה של חסד ואהבת התורה

ר' אריה ליב ב"ר בן-ציון חלוי

אפפעלדארפער ע"ה

כ"ח ניסן, תשל"ו

תנצב"ה

מגילת איכה

אֵיכָה א | יֵשְׁבָה בְּדָר הָעִיר רַבָּתִי עִם הָיְתָה
פֶּרָק א בְּאַלְמָנָה רַבָּתִי בְּגוֹיִם שְׂרָתִי בְּמִדְיָנוֹת
אֵב הָיְתָה לְמָס.

ב בָּכוּ תַבְכָּה בְּלִילָה וְדַמְעָתָה עַל לַחְיָה
 אֵין-לָהּ מְנַחֵם מִכָּל-אֲהָבֶיהָ כָּל-רֵעֶיהָ

1. **אֵיכָה** — *Alas!* The prophet סֵפֶר קִינוֹת, Jeremiah, wrote the 'Book of Lamentations.' This is the Scroll which Yehoyakim burned 'on the fire that was in the brazier' [Jeremiah 36:23]. Originally the book consisted of 3 acrostic chapters [1, 2, and 4] which Jeremiah re-wrote after the burning. He later added [chapter 3 consisting of] three additional acrostics, as well as chapter 5 (*Rashi; Mo'ed Katan 26a; Midrash; [see Ibn Ezra]*).

[The Book laments the fall of the Jews and Jerusalem after the חוֹרְבָן, Destruction, of the First Temple. (See *Overview*).

According to *Tzemach David*, the Destruction took place during the reign of King Zedekiah in the year 3338 from Creation [422 B.C.E.]. Judah was then exiled from the Land by Nebuchadnezzar. (The ten tribes had been exiled 133 years earlier).

For a period of 52 years after the Destruction, Eretz Yisrael lay desolate: the roads and villages were uninhabited; not even cattle or birds inhabited the Land (*Yoma 54a*).

The Exile lasted 70 years until 3408, when Darius, son of Queen Esther and King Ahasuerus, permitted the rebuilding of the Temple. The Destruction of the Second Temple took place in the days of Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai in

the year 3828 (*Tzemach David; see Overview to Megillas Esther, ArtScroll edition*).

אֵיכָה יֵשְׁבָה בְּדָר — *Alas! She sits in solitude.* [lit. 'How does she sit in solitude?']. [Our translation follows the *Midrash*, which understands the *אֵיכָה* ('*eichah*') as an exclamation of anguish]: Rav Nechemiah said: The word '*eichah*' implies nothing but קִינָה, lament.

Other commentators, seeing the word as a long form of אֵיךְ, 'how', understand the phrase as a rebuke or as a rhetorical question of bewilderment: '*How did this come upon her?*' (*Radak*). It may also be seen as two separate words: אֵי כֵה, 'how this', i.e. 'why has she fallen to such depths?' (*Lechem Dim'ah*).

Three people uttered prophecies using the word *אֵיכָה*, *Eichah*: Moses; Isaiah; and Jeremiah ... Rav Levi said: It is comparable to a nation that had three groomsmen: the first beheld her in her happiness; the second beheld her in her infidelity, and the third beheld her in her disgrace. Similarly, Moses beheld the Jews in their glory and happiness, and exclaimed: *אֵיכָה אֶשָּׂא לְבַדִּי שְׂרָחָם*, *How can I alone bear your cumbrance* (*Deut. 1:12*) [they presented all the difficulties of a large, growing, and flourishing nation.] Isaiah beheld them in their

[Please note: The source for every excerpt has been documented. Whenever the author has inserted a comment of his own it is inserted in square brackets.]

Alas — she sits in solitude! The city that was great with people has become like a widow. The greatest among nations, the princess among provinces, has become a tributary.

² She weeps bitterly in the night and her tear is on her cheek. She has no comforter from all her lovers;

infidelity and exclaimed: **איכה היתה**, לזונה, *How has the faithful city become a harlot?* Jeremiah beheld them in their disgrace and said: **איכה כרה**, *Alas! She sits in solitude* (*Midrash*).

[The *Talmud* notes that the numerical value of 'eichah' [**איכה** = 36] equals the 36 injunctions of the Torah punishable by excision, which Israel transgressed (*Sanhedrin 104b*).

The Book of *Lamentations* is written in a series of alphabetical acrostics. The *Talmud* notes: Why was Israel smitten with an alphabetical dirge? — Because they transgressed the Torah from *Alef* to *Tav* i.e. from the first to the last letter of the alphabet (*Sanhedrin 104b*, so *Midrash; Torah Temimah*).

Ben Azzai, when asked to comment on the word **איכה**, responded homiletically: The **א** [which numerically equals 1] represents the Oneness of God: Israel went into exile only after it defied the Only One of the world; the **י** [=10] represents the transgression of the Ten Commandments; **כ** [=20], the abandonment of circumcision which God commanded Abraham who lived in the 20th generation from Adam; and **ה** [=5] represents the denial of the Five Books of Moses (*Midrash*).

ישיבה כרה — *She sits in solitude. Bereft of her inhabitants (Rashi). ['she' — i.e. Jerusalem personified as a woman].*

God had initially blessed Israel that they would 'dwell in safety alone' [**וישכן ישראל בטח כרה**] (*Deut. 33:28*) — But now [that they transgressed, they forfeited the blessing of 'dwelling in safety alone' — i.e. unmolested by neighbors. Now they will be alone — bereft and endangered. Instead of majestic and secure solitude, they will simply] sit solitary; uninhabited (*Sanhedrin 104b*).

העיר רבתי עם — *The city that was great with people. ['The' City par excellence: Jerusalem; symbol of the whole country].*

The word **רבתי** has a superfluous **י**, *yud*. Although there are many *Midrashic* interpretations for this spelling, the simple meaning of the word is synonymous with **עם**, *רבתי עם*, i.e. it was well-populated (*Rashi*).

According to *Lechem Dim'ah*, the forms of these words **רבתי**, **שכרתי**, denote a continuous state as in the words **המשפילי**, **היושבי**, (*Psalms 113:5,6; 123:1*).

היתה כאלמנה — *has become like a widow. The Talmud stresses the prefix כ 'as': Jerusalem's 'widowhood' was not total, but temporary — 'she is like a woman whose husband went to a foreign country,*

but with the intention of returning to her' (*Sanhedrin* 104b).

Another interpretation: she is a widow — she is bereft of the ten tribes, but not of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. . . The Rabbis said: She was widowed of *all* the tribes [all the tribes — including Judah and Benjamin were exiled, and Jerusalem was bereft of them] but she was never deserted by God (*Midrash*).

The *Lechem Dim'ah* notes the famous *Midrash*: לעולם לא וזה שכינה מבוטל המערכי, 'The *Shechinah* [Divine Presence] never departed from the Western Wall.' Hence, Jerusalem was not widowed entirely — but only likened to a widow.

רבתי בגוים — *The greatest among nations*. The word 'greatest' here, means 'great in intellect' (*Midrash*).

Rav Moshe Almosnino suggests that the superfluous *yuds* in the words רבתי, שרתי, indicate first person, i.e. that the prophet wrote these laments as if God Himself were the speaker. Thus: "How is it that the city which *I* caused to be populated, which *I* made great among the nations, which *I* made as a princess among the provinces, is now solitude, desolate and *has become a tributary*? Why have I turned away from them so that now she '*cries at night*' [verse 2], '*has gone into exile*' [v.3], '*the roads themselves mourn*' [v.4]? Israel's current plight [God continues] is no mere 'coincidence.' It, too, is My doing. The reason for her suffering is [v.8]: '*Jerusalem sinned greatly*' and this is retribution for her transgression."

שרתי במדינות — *The princess among provinces*. Wherever they went [even in Exile] they became the princes of their masters (i.e. prized for their intellect) (*Sanhedrin* 104b).

היתה למס — *has become a tributary*. The *Akeidas Yitzchak* notes the pathetic contrast between Israel's former glory and its present humiliation bewailed in this verse. He divides the phrases in this verse differently for greater impact, and translates thus: איבה ושבך כרר, 'העיר רבתי עם היתה באלמנה רבתי, בגוים, שרתי, במדינות היתה למס, 'The greatest among nations has become like a widow.' 'The princess among provinces had become a tributary.'

2. רבו תבכה — *She weeps bitterly* [lit. 'weeping she weeps' (or 'weeping she will weep')]. Many interpretations are offered for the use of רבו תבכה, the double form of the verb בכה, 'weep':

According to the *Talmud*: 'Why this double weeping? — Once for the first temple; once for the second (*Sanhedrin* 104b) — i.e. since these verses were written before the erection of the Second Temple, the second reference to weeping, תבכה, is in the future tense, and hence a prophetic prediction that the destruction of the future Second Temple would also take place on the ninth of Av. (*Torah Temimah*).

Other explanations of the 'double weeping' are: On account of Judah, and of Zion and Jerusalem; on account of the exile of the ten tribes, and of Judah and Benjamin.

... Another interpretation: רבו ותבכה, she weeps and makes others weep with her (*Midrash*).

רבו is spelled with a ו instead of a ה, because the letters ה,ו,י,א are grammatically interchangeable (*Ibn Ezra*).

בלילה — *In the night*. Because the Temple was burned at night (*Rashi*).

[Even at night she had no respite

from her crying.]

The word בִּלְיָלָה, 'in the night' refers to the specific night of *Tishah b'Av* the ninth of Av, which, from the time of the מַרְגְּלִים, Spies, has been mournfully observed as a night of weeping and meditation (*Lechem Dim'ah*). . . .

As the *Talmud* (*Sanhedrin 104b*) relates: When the מַרְגְּלִים, (the spies sent by Moses to investigate the land of Canaan) returned with discouraging news, the 'people wept that night' (*Numbers 14:1*). That night was the ninth of Av, and God said to Israel: 'You have wept without cause; therefore, will I appoint [this date as a time of] weeping for you in future generations'

. . . . Another interpretation: when someone weeps at night, all those who hear him weep along (*Sanhedrin 104b*), because the sound of crying is more harrowing in the still of the night (*Midrash*).

Many *Tishah b'Av* customs are inferred from the verses in *Lamentations*. An example is *Maharam Rothenburg's* inference from כָּבוֹ בִּלְיָלָה, תִּבְכֶּה בִּלְיָלָה, 'she weeps bitterly in the night,' that the Book of *Eichah* is chanted publicly only on *Tishah b'Av* evening and not in the morning [unlike *Megillas Esther* which is read publicly both on Purim evening and morning] (*Sefer Minhagim* 34).

וְדַמְעָתָהּ עַל לִחְיָהּ — *And her tear is on her cheek*. From constant crying (*Rashi*). . . . As a woman who weeps for the husband of her youth (*Sanhedrin 104b*).

The *Midrash* relates that the tears were on account of the young men. When the enemy entered the Temple, they seized the young men and tied their hands behind their backs. They wept and their tears ran down their cheeks. They were unable to wipe them, and their tears remained

on their cheeks like the scars of a boil.

The *Zohar* notes that even though it has been said that "from the day on which the Temple was destroyed the gates of prayer have been closed, but שַׁעְרֵי דְמַעוֹת לֹא נִנְעְלוּ, the gates of weeping were not closed [*Berachos 32b*]; nevertheless only 'weeping' motivated by sincere repentance is accepted — not weeping from physical pain and suffering. In this case the weeping was not associated with repentance and such tears do not 'ascend' to heaven. They simply 'remained on her cheeks.'

The Hebrew idiom for comfort and consolation is 'wiping away the tears from the cheeks.' Because Zion found no one to comfort her, 'her tears remained on her cheeks' (*Meshech Chachmah*).

אֵין-לָהּ מְנַחֵם — *She had no comforter*.

The *Alshich* comments that she cried at night to deny her enemies pleasure from seeing her weep. Her weeping was so intense, however, that 'her tears remained on her cheeks' even by day. Nevertheless, no one's compassion was aroused: *she had not a comforter from all her lovers.*

Although she had no comforter then, God will comfort her in the future, as it is written: אֲנֹכִי אֲנֹכִי הוּא מְנַחֵמְכֶם — 'I am He that will comfort you' [*Isaiah 51:12*] (*Midrash*).

אֶהְיֶיהָ — *Her lovers*. [An ironic name for Judea's old neighbors and so-called allies: Moab, Ammon, Egypt and Edom (cf. *Isaiah* end of 39; *Jeremiah* 27:3). In the time of crisis they abandoned her.]

Several commentators (e.g. *Rav Almosnino*, *Alkabetz*, *Palgei Mayim*) interpret this differently: אֵין-לָהּ מְנַחֵם, *she derived no comfort*

פֶּרֶק א בְּגִדוֹ כִּהּ הָיוּ לָהּ לְאִיְבִים.
 גִּיד גָּלְתָה יְהוּדָה מֵעֲנִי וּמִרֵּב עִבְדָּהּ הִיא
 יִשְׁבָּה בְּגוֹלָם לֹא מִצָּאָה מְנוּחַ כָּל־רִדְפֶיהָ
 הַשִּׁיגוּהָ בֵּין הַמִּצָּרִים.
 ד דְּרָכֵי צִיּוֹן אֲבִלוֹת מִבְּלִי בְּאֵי מוֹעֵד כָּל־

מְבַלְאֵהָ i.e. *from the prophets* [who were truly 'her lovers,' but] who did not utter comforting prophecies at that time.

— כְּלִירְעֶיהָ בְּגִדוֹ כִּהּ — *All her friends have betrayed her.* 'Friends' are a lower category than 'lovers'. In the hour of need her lovers simply stayed aloof and remained neutral. Her 'friends,' however, betrayed her and actively joined the enemy Babylonians [*Psalms* 137-7; *Ovadia* 11; *Ezekiel* 25:3] (*Lechem Dim'ah*).

They were never, in fact, her friends. — הָיוּ לָהּ לְאִיְבִים — *they were really her enemies from the start* (*Kol Yehuda*).

— הָיוּ לָהּ לְאִיְבִים — *Have become her enemies.* According to the *Yalkut Shimoni*, this alludes to the מְלָאכִים, the archangels Michael and Gabriel, who were always Israel's advocates, so to speak. At the חוֹרְבָן, Destruction of the Temple, they turned against Israel. It was they who lit the fire.

3. — גָּלְתָה יְהוּדָה — *Judah has gone into exile* — from its land (*Rashi*).

'Judah' is a general term encompassing both the male and female members of the tribe of Judah (*Ibn Ezra*).

[The term 'Judah' also includes the tribe of Benjamin who was exiled together with Judah.]

The *Midrash* compares the exile

of other nations to that of Israel:

'Heathen nations also go into exile, however, since they eat the bread and drink the wine [of their enemies.] they do not experience real exile [i.e. they do not experience privation.] For Israel, however, which is forbidden to eat their bread or drink their wine, the exile is real.'

— מֵעֲנִי — *Because of suffering.* The *Midrash* and *Targum* understand this word as meaning 'oppression' i.e. Judah suffered oppression at the hands of its enemies in punishment for its having dealt oppressively with the poor and the hired servant.

D'vash V'chalav interprets עֲנִי as 'poverty,' and רַב עֲבוּדָה as 'too much work,' and comments: 'The verse suggests the diatribes our enemies have cast at us throughout ages of exile as their excuse for persecuting us. Some call us עֲנִיִּים, 'paupers,' 'beggars,' 'non-productive,' 'social parasites,' and they persecute us for that. Others go to the opposite extreme. They castigate us for עֲבוּדָה רַב, claiming that we 'work too hard,' we are too 'pushy,' 'occupy the best positions,' 'have all the money' — and they persecute us for that!

The *Alshich* suggests that a possible translation could be 'because of poverty.'

[The *Midrash* understands מֵעֲנִי as meaning *because of* עֲנִי, 'bread of affliction' (*matzah*), and

I all her friends have betrayed her, they have become
3-4 her enemies.

³ Judah has gone into exile because of suffering and harsh toil. She dwelt among the nations, but found no rest; all her pursuers overtook her in narrow straits.

⁴ The roads of Zion are in mourning for lack of festival pilgrims. All her gates are desolate, her

translates]: 'Judah was exiled for their transgression of eating chametz on Passover.'

ומרב עבדה — And harsh toil [lit. 'and great servitude'] — which the Chaldeans imposed upon her (Rashi).

The Midrash understands עבדה toil, service, in the sense of idolatry עבודה זרה. Hence: 'Judah was exiled because it served strange gods.' (Rishon l'Zion).

לא מצאה מנוח — But found no rest. Even after she was exiled from her land she found no rest (Palgei Mayim).

Rav Yudan said in the name of Resh Lakish: Had she found rest, she would not have [longed to] return [to Eretz Yisrael]' (Midrash).

[This is in fulfillment of the admonition, found in Deut. 28:65: 'And among these nations you shall . . . have no rest for the sole of your foot.' A fact which has been bitterly borne out throughout the ages.]

Kol Yehuda observes that although עוני (affliction) and גלות (exile), atone one's sins, in this case they did not. Even after the Jews suffered exile, they still found no rest.

בין המצרים — In narrow straits. i.e. by 'cornering' them (Rashi).

Some understand this literally,

but the Midrash understands the phrase בין המצרים as 'within the days of distress' i.e. 'All who pursued her overtook her during the period between the 17th of Tammuz [when the first breach in Jerusalem's walls was made] and the 9th of Av' [exactly 3 weeks later, when the Temple was destroyed].

[This phrase בין המצרים 'within the days of distress' is used today in halachic literature as well as in common Hebrew usage to refer to the period between the Seventeenth of Tammuz and the Ninth of Av.]

4. דרכי ציון — The roads of Zion.

[The phrase could be translated 'the roads of (i.e. within) Zion,' or the 'roads leading to Zion.']

['ציון', 'Zion' in its classical biblical sense refers specifically to Mount Zion, south of Mount Moriah in Jerusalem. It is often used in Scriptures interchangeably with Jerusalem as the source of קדושה, sanctity. There is an instance (Isaiah 51:16) where the Jews themselves are referred to as 'Zion'.]

מבלי באי מועד — For lack of festival pilgrims [lit. 'for lack of those coming in at the appointed seasons'].

The Midrash notes the holiness of Zion's roads. Their mourning was not for lack of common wayfarers traveling in pursuit of

פרק א
היו
ה
ימכת ק' ו
שְׁעָרֶיהָ שׁוּמְמִין כְּהֵנִיָּה נֶאֱנָחִים
בְּחוֹלָתֶיהָ נֹגוֹת וְהִיא מֵרָלָה.
הָיוּ צָרֶיהָ לְרֹאשׁ אֲיִבֶיהָ שָׁלוֹ כִּי־יְהוּה
הוֹגָה עַל־רֹב פְּשָׁעֶיהָ עוֹלָלֶיהָ הִלְכוּ שְׁבִי
לִפְנֵי־צָר.
וַיֵּצֵא מִן־בֵּית־צִיּוֹן כָּל־הַדָּרָה הָיוּ שָׂרֶיהָ

mundane goals. The verse stresses that Zion's roads mourned the absence of *עולי רגל*, pilgrims, traveling to the Temple.

שְׁעָרֶיהָ שׁוּמְמִין — *Her gates are desolate*, i.e. none entered or left through them (*Midrash*).

[The Gates of the city were the assembly place of the dignitaries of the land. Here, Torah was taught, disputes settled, and commerce transacted. Its 'desolation' meant that one of the focal points of civic life now ceased to exist.]

כְּהֵנִיָּה נֶאֱנָחִים — *Her priests sigh*. At the loss of their priestly dues (*Midrash*).

בְּחוֹלָתֶיהָ נֹגוֹת — *Her maidens are aggrieved*. At no longer being able to go out and rejoice, as was their custom, on the 15th of Av and Yom Kippur [which the *Mishnah* in *Taanis* 26b describes as two very joyous days of the Jewish calendar] (*Targum*).

וְהִיא מֵרָלָה — *And she herself is embittered*. 'she' i.e. Israel itself; the sum total of its roads, gates, priests and maidens (*Midrash Lekach Tov*).

5. הָיוּ צָרֶיהָ לְרֹאשׁ — *Her adversaries have become her master* [lit. 'her enemies have become a head']. [In fulfillment of the curse in Deut. 28:44 הָיוּ יְהוּה לְרֹאשׁ 'He

[your enemy] shall be the head.'

According to the *Talmud* 'whoever causes Israel distress attains leadership' (*Sanhedrin* 104b; *Gittin* 56a). Many commentators interpret this as a punishment because the greater they become, the greater will be their downfall later when they are punished for what they did to Israel. Or, as the *Maharsha* explains, this is in deference to Israel — that it not suffer the shame of being conquered by an inferior nation.

Tosafos, *Chagigah* 13b explains: Whoever distresses Israel was previously made a chief [because the status of Israel is so high that it can only be overcome by a nation of great eminence.]

The *Alshich* notes that ראש, 'a head', 'a chief', is singular, whereas צָרֶיהָ, *her adversaries*, is plural. He explains that Israel's enemies — nations that, historically, had differences among themselves — now combined. He translates thus: *The adversaries of Israel placed one chief over themselves*, combining forces under one command to combat Israel; her enemies *made peace* [from שָׁלוֹם, 'peace'] among themselves — a peace that was divinely ordained so that they might more easily overpower Israel — because 'God had aggrieved her ...'

כִּי הָיָה הוֹגָה עַל־רֹב פְּשָׁעֶיהָ — *For HASHEM has aggrieved her for her*

I priests sigh; her maidens are aggrieved, and she herself is embittered.

5-6

⁵ Her adversaries have become her master, her enemies are at ease, for HASHEM has aggrieved her for her abundant transgressions. Her young children have gone into captivity before the enemy.

⁶ Gone from the daughter of Zion is all her

abundant transgressions. The Midrash, as interpreted by the commentaries, notes that God's punishment was in direct proportion to Israel's many transgressions. Even *היו צריה לראש* 'her enemies have become her master,' was part of the punishment (Yafe Anaf; Perush Maharzu; Torah Temimah).

[The word *רב*, many, can also mean 'majority,' 'most.' Since the phrase is *רב פשעיה*, 'her many sins,' instead of *כל פשעיה*, 'all of her sins,' it is, perhaps, possible to translate the verse 'For God has aggrieved her for the majority of her transgressions.' In the final analysis, God was compassionate, for had He exacted punishment at that time for all her transgressions, no one would have survived.]

Harav David Cohen points out that the Rambam in *Hilchos Teshuvah* 2:2 discusses the evaluation of iniquities and merits and concludes: 'This valuation takes into account not the number but the magnitude [i.e. qualitative rather than quantitative] of merits and iniquities. There may be a single merit that outweighs many iniquities ... and there may be one iniquity that offsets many merits ... God alone makes this evaluation; He alone knows how to set off merit against iniquities.'

עולליה הקלו שבי — Her young

children have gone into captivity.

The Midrash stresses that the children are the most beloved to God. According to this view, the Sanhedrin was exiled, but the Shechinah [God's Presence; see Introduction] did not go into exile with them; the priestly watches were exiled, but the Shechinah did not go into exile with them. However, when the children were exiled, the Shechinah went into exile with them. Therefore, it is written 'Her young children have gone into captivity before the enemy.' This is immediately followed by 'Gone from the daughter of Zion is all her splendor' [i.e. the Shechinah].

6. *ויצא מבית ציון כל הדרה* — Gone from the daughter of Zion is all her splendor. Many interpretations of *הדרה*, 'her splendor' are offered by the Midrash: referring to HASHEM; to the Sanhedrin; to the Sages; to the priests; and to the children.

The Alshich interprets the simple meaning of the verse as a reference to the exile of the great men of that generation, specifically the *חכמים* [lit. 'craftsmen and the smiths', II Kings 24:14] — the most pious and learned men. Our sages tell us that HASHEM ordained that they should be exiled eleven years before the *חורבן*, Destruction, and the exile of the bulk of the population to

פָּרָק א כְּאַיִלִּים לֹא-מָצְאוּ מְרֻעָה וַיִּלְכוּ בְּלֹא-כֹחַ
זֶה לִפְנֵי רוֹדֶף.

ו וְזָכְרָה יְרוּשָׁלַם יָמֵי עֲנִיָּהּ וּמְרוֹדֶיהָ כֹּל
מִחֲמַדֶּיהָ אֲשֶׁר הָיוּ מִיָּמֵי קֶדֶם בְּנִפְלֹ
עָמָה בִּידֶ-צָר וְאֵין עֹזֹר לָהּ רְאוּתָה צָרִים
שָׁחֲקוּ עַל-מִשְׁבָּתָהּ.

ח חֲטָא חֲטָאָה יְרוּשָׁלַם עַל-כֵּן לְנִידָה
הִיתָה כֹּל-מִכְבָּדֶיהָ הִזְלוּתָה בִּי-רְאוּ

Babylon, in order that they might establish yeshivos there, so that Torah would not be forgotten. Thus, because the students in Eretz Yisrael were left without their teachers for eleven years, the verse tells us 'they were like deer that found no pasture'.

Her leaders [lit. 'officers' or 'princes'] were like deer. The Talmud [Shabbos 119b] and Midrash note that the leaders of Israel were likened to אֵילִים, deer, because they did not rebuke one another: 'As deer turn their faces one beneath the other during intense heat, so Israel's leaders would see a transgression committed and turn away their faces [deliberately shutting their eyes to evil]. The Holy One, blessed be He said: A time will come [during an exile when you will go into captivity like pastureless deer] when I will do the same to you [i.e. I will turn away My Face from you].'

Before the pursuer. Rashi observes that wherever else in Scripture the word רוֹדֶף appears it is spelled חָסַר, defectively [רוֹדֶף — i.e. without the ו, vav]. In our verse, however, the 'full' spelling is used

to imply that the Jews were pursued vigorously and fully.

Jerusalem recalled. While in exile (Rashi).

The days of her affliction. i.e. the Destruction which was the cause of her affliction (Rashi).

And (her) sorrow. In exile (Ibn Ezra).

The Midrash, translates thus: 'In the days of her affliction she remembered the מְרֻדִין, 'revolts' in which she rebelled against HASHEM.' כל מִחֲמַדֶּיהָ, 'All her treasures,' refer to the words of the Torah.

Ibn Ezra translates differently, thus: 'Jerusalem recalled, during the days of her affliction and sorrow (in exile), all her former treasures . . .'

They gloated at her downfall [lit. 'at her cessation' — from the joyous observance of Sabbath and festivals (Rashi).]

The Midrashic interpretation of מִשְׁבָּתָהּ ['Mishbateha'] is: 'her Shabbos' — Sabbath, Sabbatical years. Rashi amplifies: The Jews observed the Sabbath and Sabbatical years in exile though they had not done so while in their own

splendor. Her leaders were like deer that found no pasture, but walked on without strength before the pursuer.

⁷ Jerusalem recalled the days of her affliction and sorrow — all the treasures that were hers in the days of old. With the fall of her people into the enemy's hand and none to help her, her enemies saw her and gloated at her downfall.

⁸ Jerusalem sinned greatly, she has therefore become a wanderer. All who once respected her disparage her, for they have seen her disgrace. She

country. Their captors laughed at them saying: 'Fools! In your own country you did not observe them; now, in exile, you are observant?'

8. חָטָא חֲטָאָה יְרוּשָׁלַם *Jerusalem sinned greatly.* [lit. 'Jerusalem sinned a sin.']

[The author now attributes all of the suffering described in verses 1-7 to Divine retribution for 'Jerusalem's' grievous sins.]

The *Midrash*, commenting on the use of the double verb חָטָא חֲטָאָה, 'sinned a sin', explains: 'They sinned doubly and were punished doubly, as it is written: בִּי לִקְחָהּ — 'She received from God's hand double for all her sins' (Isaiah 40:2); and they were comforted doubly, as it is written: נַחֲמוּ נַחֲמוּ עַמִּי 'Comfort My people, comfort' (Isaiah 40:1).

The *Meshech Chachmah* interprets the double verb: 'Jerusalem sinned repeatedly' and grew accustomed to the fact, viewing it naturally, and feeling no remorse...

[As the *Talmud* (*Moed Katan* 27b) remarks: 'As soon as a person has committed a sinful act and has repeated it — נַעֲשִׂיתָ לוֹ כְּהִיתָר, it has become to him as though it were

something permissible' (see *Overview*).]

According to *Hagaon Rav Moshe Feinstein* שליט"א, a sin consists of two parts: the sinful act itself and the thoughts and satisfaction surrounding it. Each part of the sin is evaluated separately and punished separately. Therefore the verse uses a twin expression of sin. In the same way, the thought leading up to a good deed and the satisfaction one derives from having performed it are rewarded by God along with the good deed itself.

עַל בֶּן לַנִּירָה הִיָּתָה — *She has therefore become a wanderer.* [The translation of נִירָה, 'wanderer' follows *Rashi* who derives the word from נֹר, 'wanderer'.]

Ibn Ezra interprets the word as מְנוּדָּה, an object of scorn; of head-nodding [i.e. all who see her shake their head in scorn].

The *Talmud* translates the word as *Niddah* (נִידָה) a ritually unclean, menstruant woman, and comments: 'Just as a *Niddah* becomes permissible (to her husband after the prescribed period of separation), so, too, Jerusalem will be reunited with her children' (*Taanis* 20a).

עֲרוֹתָהּ גַם-הִיא נִאְוָה וַתִּשָּׁב אַחֲרָיָהּ.
 טמאתה בשוליה לא זכרה אחריתה
 ותרד פלאים אין מנחם לה ראה יהוה
 את-עניי כי הגדיל אויב.
 ידו פרש צר על כל-מחמדיה כיראתה
 גוים באו מקדשה אשר צויתה לא-יבאו
 בקהל לך.
 כל-עמה נאנחים מבקשים לחם נתנו
 מחמדיהם באכל להשיב נפש ראה
 יהוה והביטה כי הייתי זוללה.

יא

ייתיר ו

For they have seen her disgrace. [lit. 'for they have seen her nakedness'].

And turns away — וַתִּשָּׁב אַחֲרָיָהּ [shunned and humiliated].

Her impurity is on her hems. Rashi explains that her sins were plainly evident for all to see.

Alshich, however, translates this as an allusion to the time of the Destruction when the sinners hid their sins under their skirts, so to speak — they worshiped idols and sinned behind closed doors, acting hypocritically.

She has sunk astonishingly. Her sinking was unprecedented but nevertheless no one consoled her because they said: How can we console her? She brought this all upon herself! (Toldos Noach).

Look HASHEM ... for the enemy has acted prodigiously' [lit. 'has become great']

[God is beseeched because He is the only Comforter Zion has left].

Although because of our great sins we do not merit Your compassion, nevertheless the enemy who prevails, defies You, and for that reason — to remove the desecration of Your Name — You should help us (Palgei Mayim).

[The word הגדיל 'has acted prodigiously' suggests that the enemy has become overzealous in carrying out his mission; he is rebellious and must be punished].

The enemy spread out his hand. This verse continues the entreaty at the end of the last verse 'Look HASHEM ... for the enemy has desecrated to such an extent ... that he dared stretch out his hand against Your sanctuary (Palgei Mayim).

About whom You had commanded that they should not enter Your congregation.

When the enemies entered the Temple, Ammonites and Moabites entered among them. While the others ran to plunder the silver and gold, the Ammonites and Moabites

I herself sighs and turns away.

9-11 ⁹ Her impurity is on her hems, she was heedless of the consequences. She has sunk astonishingly, there is no one to comfort her. 'Look, HASHEM, at my misery, for the enemy has acted prodigiously!'

¹⁰ The enemy spread out his hand on all her treasures; indeed, she saw nations invade her sanctuary — about whom You had commanded that they should not enter Your congregation.

¹¹ All her people are sighing, searching for bread. They traded their treasures for food to keep alive. "Look, HASHEM, and behold what a glutton I have become!"

ran to plunder the Torah itself to expurge the verse לא יבא עמוני ומואבי בקהל ה', 'An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter the Assembly of HASHEM' (Midrash).

Based on this Midrash the Alshich paraphrases the verse: 'The enemy spread out his hand upon the gold and silver treasures of the Temple — with impunity and with no fear of God — because he saw nations invading her Sanctuary. Which nations? — Ammon and Moab — concerning whom You had commanded that they should not enter Your congregation.'

The Lechem Dim'ah points out that the intention of Ammon and Moab in performing this brazen act was not to expunge the verse. There were many other Torah Scrolls in the land which still contained that verse — tearing it from the Temple scroll would not have changed their forbidden status. Rather their sole aim was to defy God and His Torah with impunity.

Rashi notes that מקמריהם, 'treasures,' refers to the Torah, Israel's greatest treasure.

11. כל עמה נאנחים — All her people are sighing, at their many misfortunes, but the most distressing of them all was starvation (Alshich).

מבקשים לחם — Searching for bread, i.e. for basic sustenance (Akeidas Yitzchak).

Tiferes Uziel observes that the people were so involved in the quest for their own sustenance that they seemed to be oblivious to the awesome dimensions of the national tragedy.

נתנו מקמריהם — They traded [lit. 'gave'] their treasures. Bread was so scarce during the siege that people had to barter their most valuable possessions for it (Ibn Shu'ib).

Akeidas Yitzchak stresses 'their' — even though food was so scarce, the verse notes that they gave up only their own possessions. No one resorted to stealing.

ה' ראה — 'Look HASHEM.' [An impassioned plea. From this point on, Jerusalem, itself, laments].

כי הייתי זוללה — What a glutton I have become. Ibn Ezra understands

סַרְקָא יב לֹא אֲלִיכֶם כָּל-עַבְרֵי דְרָךְ הַבֵּיטוּ וְרָאוּ
יבִיד אִם-יֵשׁ מִכְאוּב כְּמִכְאֹבִי אֲשֶׁר עוֹלָל לִי
 אֲשֶׁר הוֹגָה יְהוָה בְּיוֹם חֲרוֹן אַפּוֹ.
 יג מִמָּרוֹם שָׁלַח-אֵשׁ בְּעֶצְמֹתַי וַיִּרְדָּנָה פֶּרֶשׁ
 לִי לְרִגְלִי הַשִּׁיבֵנִי אַחֲרָיִךְ נִתְּנִי שְׁמָמָה
 כָּל-הַיּוֹם דָּוָה.
 יד נִשְׁקָד עַל פִּשְׁעֵי בִידוֹ יִשְׁתַּרְגּוּ עָלָיו עַל-

ל' ועירא

וולל, *glutton* to be related to וולל, *glutton, and drunkard* (Deut. 21:20) [i.e. ironically, the starving Jews appeared to be gluttons because they traded their finest possessions for food].

[The phrase could also be translated literally: 'Look, HASHEM, and behold (what has happened to me) because I used to be gluttonous!']

The Midrash understands this to be related to וילותא disgrace: 'how disgraced I have become' — and narrates an anecdote showing that it had become an insult to be called a 'Jew'.

12. לֹא אֲלִיכֶם — *May it not befall you* [lit. 'not to you']. This translation follows the *Talmud*, (*Sanhedrin* 104b); *Midrash*, and most commentators: The Community of Israel says to the nations of the world: 'May there not occur to you what has occurred to me.'

Alshich offers an alternative translation. Only one who experienced affliction can feel the pain. Therefore, Zion calls out: 'Such pain has never befallen you. It is only I who suffer so. Nevertheless, observe me even briefly and you will recognize that there is no pain as severe as that

with which HASHEM has afflicted me on the day of His wrath.'

— *All who pass by this road* [i.e. all who chance to see my sorrow]. (*Targum*).

The Midrash translates עוברי, *transgressors*, i.e. 'all who transgress the way of the Torah.' — The Midrash *Lekach Tov* explains: 'Unto no one else who transgressed the ways of Torah has such calamity befallen as has befallen me!'

— *If there is any pain like my pain*. [i.e. 'If He dealt as severely with any other nation as with me' (*Midrash Lekach Tov*).

— *On the day of His wrath* — i.e. the Ninth of Av when so many tragedies befell Israel throughout its history (*Shaar Bas Rabim*).

The Midrash stresses 'the day' i.e. that particular day upon which God's fierce anger was kindled: 'Had Israel repented that very day they could have cooled [i.e. averted] His anger.'

13. מִמָּרוֹם שָׁלַח אֵשׁ בְּעֶצְמֹתַי — *From on high He sent a fire into my bones*. The Midrash understands this literally: God Himself sent a

I 12 May it not befall you — all who pass by this
12-14 road. Behold and see, if there is any pain like my pain
which befell me; which HASHEM has afflicted me on
the day of His wrath.

13 From on high He sent a fire into my bones, and it
crushed them. He spread a net for my feet hurling me
backward. He made me desolate; in constant misery.

14 The burden of my transgressions was
accumulated in His hand; they were knit together

fire to burn the Temple so the
heathens could not boast that they
themselves destroyed it.*

וַיִּרְדָּהּ — And it crushed them. [The
word is obscure. Various transla-
tions are offered: Some commen-
tators hold the subject is 'the fire'
and derive this word from ירד
descending, translating: and sent it
down, i.e. 'From on high He sent
down the fire'; Most others,
however, — e.g. Targum; Rashi —
identify 'bones' as the object and
derive this verb from רדה 'conquer',
'crush', 'overcome' i.e. 'the fire ef-
fectively destroyed them' (as in our
translation)].

Midrashically, the word is ex-
plained as a compound of רָאָה דִּין.
'He saw justice;' i.e. He saw that the

מִנְחַת הַדִּין, Attribute of Justice, over-
took them.

פָּרַשׁ רֶשֶׁת לַרְגְלִי — He spread a net
for my feet.[i.e. God Himself added
to Zion's troubles by metaphori-
cally spreading out a net or trap in
her path, ensnaring her].

וַיִּשְׁבֹּקֵנִי אָחוֹר — Hurling me
backward [lit. 'He turned me away']
— 'Away from prophecy, from
priesthood, from royalty' (Midrash
Lekach Tov).

14. נִשְׁקָדוּ ... וַיִּשְׁתָּרְנוּ — Were
accumulated ... were knit.

[This verse is thus explained by
the commentators: Instead of con-
stantly doling out small, propor-
tioned punishment for every one of
Zion's sins whenever she transgres-

* Jerusalem thus said to the daughter of Babylon: 'Have they not fought against me from on high, would you have been able to fight me? Had they not sent fire against me from on high, could you have conquered me? Only a slain lion have you killed; ground meal have you ground; a burnt city did you set ablaze!' (Midrash; cf. Sanhedrin 96b).

When the Destruction was to begin, an angel of HASHEM came down from heaven and breached the walls of Jerusalem. The enemies came and set up a platform on the Temple Mount on the spot where Solomon used to sit when he took counsel with the elders. As they sat deliberating, they looked up and saw four angels descending; in their hands were four flaming torches which they placed at the four corners of the Temple, setting it on fire.

When the High Priest saw that the Temple was on fire, he took the keys and cast them heavenward, saying: 'Here are the keys of Your House; I have been an unworthy custodian of it.' He started to go, but the enemy killed him at the altar, on the very spot where he used to offer the daily sacrifice. His daughter ran out crying 'Woe is me! My father — delight of my eyes!' They slaughtered her, too, and her blood mingled with her father's.

When the priests and Levites saw that the Temple was burning, they took their harps and

צָנְאֲרֵי הַכְּשִׁיל כַּחַי נִתְּנִי אֲדָנִי בִיָּדִי לֹא-
אוּכַל קוּם.

טו סֵלָה כָּל-אֲבִירֵי | אֲדָנִי בְּקֶרְבִי קָרָא עָלַי
מוֹעֵד לְשֹׁכֵר בַּחוּרֵי גֵת דָּרָךְ אֲדָנִי
לְבָתוּלַת בֵּת-יְהוּדָה.

טו עַל-אֵלָה | אֲנִי בּוֹכָה עֵינִי | עֵינִי יִרְדָּה

sed, God collected all her transgressions, noting and remembering them. He then metaphorically 'knit' them together into a heavy garment which he thrust upon her neck in one heavy, cumulative load, effectively weighing her down, and sapping her strength until she was unable to withstand the enemy.]

The Midrash suggests an alternative interpretation of נִשְׁקַר, relating it to שָׁקַר, *carefully considered*: 'HASHEM carefully considered how and when to bring calamity upon me. He said: If I exile them in winter they will be afflicted by the cold and perish; I will therefore banish them in summer, so that even if they sleep on the roads and out in the open none of them will come to harm. If I exile them in winter there will be no grapes on the vine or figs on the fig trees; I will therefore exile them in summer.

... Thus, God was compassionate and concerned for His people even when He punished them (*Torah Temimah*).

— עָלוּ עַל צָנְאֲרֵי — *Were thrust upon my neck* [lit. 'ascended upon my neck'].

Ibn Ezra explains: 'The sins themselves are so intertwined that, like a creeping vine, they cling to me and climb to my neck.'

'Through all the tribulations and suffering I did not repudiate HASHEM, but עָלוּ עַל צָנְאֲרֵי 'His yoke [i.e. of 'His Heavenly Kingdom] is upon my neck [Midrashically reading the word עָלוּ, *ascended*, as עָלוּ His yoke], and twice daily I proclaimed His Unity, saying, ... שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל, *Hear O Israel, HASHEM our God is HASHEM the Only One*' (Midrash).

— הַכְּשִׁיל בָּחִי — *He sapped my*

trumpets and let themselves fall into the flames, and were consumed. The maidens who wove the curtains for the Sanctuary also let themselves fall into the flames so that the enemies should not violate them.

When King Zedekiah saw all that what was happening he attempted to flee along with his ten sons through an underground passage that led to Jericho. But they were caught by Nebuzaraddan and were sent to Nebuchadnezzar who pronounced the death sentence upon them.

'I beg you,' Zedekiah said, 'slay me first so I may not see the blood of my sons.'

'No! Slay us first,' the sons pleaded, 'so we will not see our father's blood shed on earth.' Nebuchadnezzar did what they asked: he slaughtered them before Zedekiah. He then gouged out Zedekiah's eyes and took him to Babylon.

Zedekiah kept crying out: 'Come and see, everyone! Jeremiah prophesied truly when he said' to me: You will go to Babylon and in Babylon you will die, but your eyes will not have seen Babylon. I would not listen to his words. And here I am in Babylon, and my eyes do not see it' (Pesikta Rabbasi).

I and thrust upon my neck — He sapped my strength.
15-16 The Lord has delivered me into the hands of those I cannot withstand.

¹⁵ The Lord has trampled all my heroes in my midst; He proclaimed a set time against me to crush my young men. As in a winepress the Lord has trodden the maiden daughter of Judah.

¹⁶ Over these things I weep; my eyes run with

strength. 'He' refers to God. This translation follows *Alshich*. According to *Ibn Ezra*, the subject is 'the burden of my transgressions,' and the translation would thus be 'it sapped my strength.'

15. סָלַח — Trampled [lit. 'humiliated', 'subordinated'].

כָּל אַבִּירֵי — My heroes. The metaphor is clear: God first destroys the strong men, then the young men, leaving the defenseless maidens open to wanton slaughter. So, too, was Jerusalem destroyed: First the righteous the חָרָשׁ וְהַמִּסְגֵּר [lit. 'craftsman and the smith,' referred to in *Alshich's* comment to verse 6, above] were exiled, leaving the עַם, the general population, open to 'having their blood squeezed out like grapes in a wine press' (*Palgei Mayim*).

קָרָא עָלַי מוֹעֵד — He proclaimed a set time against me. i.e. the Ninth of Av (*Taanis* 29a). [See Comm. to verse 2, s.v. בְּלִילָה.]

[Since Tishah b'Av is referred to as מוֹעֵד, 'set-time,' 'festival,' the Sages state that halachically, as on a holiday, *Tachanun* is not said during *Minchah* services on Erev Tishah b'Av (*Shulchan Aruch*, *Orach Chayim* 552).

לְבַתוּלַת בֵּת יְהוּדָה — The maiden daughter of Judah. i.e. Jerusalem (*Rashi*).

16. עַל אֵלֶּה אֲנִי בּוֹכֶה — Over these things I weep. The verb בּוֹכֶה implies a constant action: 'I weep incessantly'; or, 'I have become known as a habitual weeper' (*Lechem Dim'ah*). Various causes for her weeping are offered in the *Midrash*, which relates many harrowing incidents of barbarous atrocities which befell the Jews at the time of the Destruction.* [The post-Holocaust generation understands only too well how the Jewish people can suffer at the hands of cruel and bestial people. Indeed, the atrocities of the Nazis are also

* The Jews who hid in caves were reduced to such starvation that they would devour the flesh of their slain brethren. Every day one would venture out and bring back a corpse for them to eat.

One day, one of them went out and found the slain body of his father. He buried him and marked the spot. He returned and reported that he found nothing.

They sent someone else out to search for food. He followed the scent and he discovered the fresh grave and opened it. He brought back the body and they ate it.

After they had eaten they asked him where he found the corpse. He told them, and mentioned the distinguishing mark over the grave.

'Woe to me!' the son exclaimed. 'I have eaten the flesh of my father!'

... Then the Holy Spirit cried out 'For these things I weep.'

מִים בִּי־רַחֵק מִמֶּנִּי מִנַּחֵם מִשִּׁיב נֶפֶשִׁי
הִיוּ בְנֵי שׁוֹמְמִים כִּי גִבֹּר אוֹיֵב.

י פֶּרֶשָׁה צִוּן בִּידֵיהָ אֵין מִנַּחֵם לָהּ צוֹנָה
יְהוָה לִיעֲקֹב סִבִּיבָיו צָרָיו הֵיטָה יְרוּשָׁלַם
לְנֶדֶה בִּינֵיהֶם.

יח צָדִיק הוּא יְהוָה כִּי פִיהוּ מְרִיתִי שְׁמֻעוֹ
נָא כָל־* עַמִּים וְרָאוּ מִכְּאֲבֵי בְּתוּלָתִי
וּבְחֹרֵי הֶלְכוֹ בְּשָׁבִי.

יִהְיֶה עִמָּךְ

יט קָרָאתִי לְמַאֲהָבִי הֵמָּה רַמּוֹנֵי כְּהֲנֵי וְזִקְנֵי

foreshadowed in the lament of Jeremiah.)

Also: 'For these things I weep': for the shedding of righteous blood; the abolition of the *כהונה ומלכות* priesthood and kingship; also the cessation of Torah study, which led to the Destruction (Midrash).

מִים — My eye [lit. 'My eye, My eye'] runs with water. Incessantly, as suggested by the use of the double noun (Rashi).

[Double nouns are frequently used in poetic forms of anguish. Compare ראשי ראשי, 'My head, my head!', (11 Kings 4:19); מְעֵי מְעֵי 'My innards, my innards!' (Jeremiah 4:19)].

Palgei Mayim notes: 'run with water' — i.e. the tears flow uncontrollably.

The phrase עַל־אֵלֶּה אֲנִי בּוֹכֶה — 'Over these things I weep' refers to all the affliction and suffering enumerated in the previous verses; the phrase עֵינֵי יִרְדָּה מִים 'My eyes run with water' is directly attributed to that which follows: because there is no comforter . . .

מִנַּחֵם — Because a comforter [Hebrew: 'menachem'] is far

from me. 'Comforter' in this verse refers to Mashiach whose name, according to the Talmud [Sanhedrin 98b] is 'Menachem' i.e. 'comforter,' and who, according to the Midrash is born on Tishah b'Av.

17. [In this parenthetic verse there is a momentary shift from first person (Zion lamenting) to third person. Jeremiah becomes the speaker and acknowledges that HASHEM is the executor of the calamity].

פֶּרֶשָׁה צִוּן בִּידֵיהָ — Zion spreads out her hands. In supplication and as a display of grief (Akeidas Yitzchak).
לֹא אֵין מִנַּחֵם לָהּ — There was none to comfort her.

Although the sight of a grief-stricken person spreading out his hands usually evokes the compassion of witnesses, nevertheless, the verse tells us that for Zion there was none to comfort her. And no wonder! 'Such was the command of HASHEM against Jacob . . .'

The Divine Decree had been issued, not to be recalled (Lechem Dim'ah).

צוֹנָה ה' לִיעֲקֹב — God commanded against Jacob [i.e. the Jews] that his

I water because a comforter to revive my spirit is far
17-19 from me. My children have become forlorn, because
the enemy has prevailed.

¹⁷ Zion spreads out her hands; there was none to comfort her. HASHEM commanded against Jacob that his enemies should surround him; Jerusalem has become as one unclean in their midst.

¹⁸ It is HASHEM Who is righteous, for I disobeyed His utterance. Listen, all you peoples and behold my pain: My maidens and my youths have gone into captivity.

¹⁹ I called for my lovers but they deceived me. My

enemies should surround him. God even had their enemies exiled with them so that when the Jews were driven to Babylon and Assyria they would still be surrounded by their enemies (Rashi).

סביביו צָרֵיו — That his enemies should surround him. [This follows Rashi.] The literal translation (following *Lechem Dim'ah*) is: סביביו 'Those who surround him' i.e. the neighboring countries who should have been most sympathetic to Israel's plight, צָרֵיו, are his enemies, gloating over his plight.

לִנְדָה — As one unclean. i.e. an object of derision (Rashi).

Sifsei Chachamim notes that above, in verse 8, Rashi translates the same word, נִדָּה, as 'wanderer'. There the word is spelled נִידָה, derived from נָדַד, wandering; here it is spelled נִדָּה, as in 'isolated', 'menstruant woman.'

18. [Zion itself resumes the lament, and confesses publicly and without reservation that God is righteous and justified in what He has done.]

כִּי פִיהוּ מְרִיתִי — For I disobeyed His utterance, i.e. His Torah (*Lekach Tov*).

According to the Midrash these words of confession were also uttered by King Yoshiah as his dying statement.

שָׁמְעוּ נָא כָּל הָעַמִּים — Listen, all you peoples. The *Aishich* notes that the exiles were so dispersed, that by the end of the 70 year period of the first exile — in the days of Ahasuerus — the Jews were scattered throughout every corner of the inhabited world. Therefore, the verse stresses כָּל הָעַמִּים, all you peoples i.e., 'regardless of who and where you are you can behold my pain, for some of my people are in your midst.'

בְּחֹלְתִי וּבְחוּרֵי הָלְכָו בְּשָׁבִי — My maidens and my youths [lit. 'young men'] have gone into captivity. i.e. My transgressions were so great and all pervasive that even my maidens and young men — who might not have sinned themselves — were exiled on my account (*Palgei Mayim*).

קָרָאתִי לְמֹאֲהֵבֵי הָמָּה רְמוּנִי — I called for my lovers but they

בְּעִיר גִּזְעוּ בֵּי-בִקְשׁוֹ אֶבֶל לָמוֹ וַיִּשִּׁיבוּ
אֶת-נַפְשָׁם.

כ רָאָה יְהוָה בִּי-צָר-לִי מֵעֵי חֲמֻרָם
וְנִהַפֵּךְ לִבִּי בְּקֶרְבִּי כִּי מָרוּ מִרִּיתִי מִחוּץ
שִׁבְלֵה-חָרֶב בְּבֵית כְּמוֹת.

כא שָׁמְעוּ כִּי נֶאֱנָחָה אָנִי אֵין מְנַחֵם לִי כָל-
אֵיבֵי שָׁמְעוּ רָעָתִי שָׁשׂוּ כִּי אֶתָּה עֲשִׂיתָ
הַבֹּאֶת יוֹם-קָרָאתָ וַיְהִי כְמוֹנִי.

כב תָּבֹא כָל-רָעָתָם לִפְנֵיךָ וְעוֹלָל לָמוֹ

deceived me. 'Lovers' — i.e. those who feigned friendship (Rashi) [i.e. the neighboring countries — Egypt, Moab, Ammon, with whom Judea had hoped to form an alliance. See comm. verse 2, s.v. אֶהְבֵּתָ, her lovers].

The Rabbis interpret this verse as an allusion to the false prophets who made me love their idol-worship. הָקָה רְמוּנִי, *they deceived me* by incessantly uttering false prophecies of reassurance decrying Jeremiah's calls for repentance, until they caused me to go into exile.

Alshich comments that the very act of 'calling,' i.e. depending upon her neighbors was sinful; and Zion now acknowledged the folly of her misdirected trust.

הָקָה רְמוּנִי — *They deceived me.* Rashi explains that this refers to the 'Ishmaelites.*

... כֹּהֲנֵי חֲקִנִי — *My priests and my elders . . . i.e., the priests and elders whose prayers are most efficacious. They perished because they should*

have prayed and supplicated for our redemption; instead they were concerned only about לָמוֹ, *themselves* — their own food and sustenance (Kol Yehuda).

20. רָאָה ה' — *See, HASHEM* [This verse begins with a supplication to God to bear witness to the extent of Zion's affliction, and culminates with an appeal (verse 22) for Divine Retribution against the enemy.]

מֵעֵי חֲמֻרָם — *My insides* [lit. 'my intestines'] *churn.* [The term מֵעֵי, 'my innards' is used extensively in Scriptures to denote emotion so strong that it effects the innermost depths of one's being.]

וְנִהַפֵּךְ לִבִּי בְּקֶרְבִּי כִּי מָרוּ מִרִּיתִי — *My heart is turned over inside me for I rebelled grievously, i.e. My heart is 'turned over inside me' in punishment for having rebelled (Midrash).*

כְּבֵית כְּמוֹת — *Inside it was death-like.* The fear of death, even within the house, was as real as the enemy's sword causing destruction from without (Rashi).

* When the captives were led through their lands, the Ishmaelites met them on the way and appeared to be friendly and sympathetic. They offered food and drink and gave them leather bags filled with nothing but air instead of water. When they raised them to their mouths, the air entered their bodies and they fell dead (Pesikta Rabbasi).

I priests and my elders perished in the city as they
20-22 sought food for themselves to keep alive.

²⁰ See, HASHEM, how distressed I am; my insides churn! My heart is turned over inside me for I rebelled grievously. Outside the sword bereaved, inside was death-like.

²¹ They heard how I sighed, there was none to comfort me. All my enemies heard of my plight and rejoiced, for it was You Who did it. O bring on the day You proclaimed and let them be like me!

²² Let all their wickedness come before You, and

As Moses said: מחוץ תשבל־הרב ומחדרים אימה — *From without the sword bereaves, and terror within* [Deut 32:25] (Midrash).

21. שמעו בי נא־נחה אני — *They heard how I sighed.* i.e. my 'lovers' [referred to above in verses 2 and 19] heard me sigh and did not even comfort me; my real enemies, on the other hand, actually rejoiced upon hearing my plight knowing You have caused it (Ibn Ezra).

כי אתה עשית — *For it was You who did it.* [i.e. My misfortune emanated from Your will]. 'You are the cause of their hating us because You prohibited us from eating their food or marrying their children. Had we socialized and intermarried with them, would they not have compassion upon us and on their offspring?' (Midrash; Rashi).

Rav Yosef Kara comments that the heathen kings never imagined Jerusalem to be vulnerable to foreign conquest. It was only after Jeremiah's prophecy: 'For lo, I will call all the families of the northerly kingdoms, says HASHEM, and they will come and each will place his throne at the entrance of Jerusa-

lem's gates (Jer. 1:15). They rejoiced, knowing that now the decree was Divine and that Jerusalem is indeed violate.

הבאת יום־קראת — *O bring on the day You proclaimed.* [lit. 'you brought' or 'will bring'. Our translation follows Midrash, Rashi, Ibn Ezra and most commentators who translate this as a wish]: May You bring upon them a similar 'set time' (verse 15) as You have proclaimed against me and let them suffer as I have suffered.

The Midrash Lekach Tov and Peirush haTa'amim suggest a possible alternate translation: '... my enemies delighted that You caused [the fall of Jerusalem] by bringing on the day You prophetically foretold, allowing them to conquer me.'

ויהיו כמני — *And let them be like me.* i.e. 'Let them share my suffering, — but let them have no part in my ultimate restoration' (Midrash).

22. תבא כל־רעתם לפניך — *Let all their wickedness come before You* [i.e. in judgment].

ועולל למו באשר עוללת לי — *And inflict them as You inflicted me* [lit.

פרק א בְּאִשֶּׁר עוֹלָלָתָ לִי עַל כָּל-פִּשְׁעֵי בְּיָרְבוֹת
אֲנַחְתִּי וּלְבִי דָוִי.

פרק ב אֵיכָה יָעִיב בָּאָפוֹ | אֲדָנִי אֶת-כַּתְצִיּוֹן
הַשְּׁלִיךְ מִשְׁמַיִם אֶרֶץ תַּפְאֶרֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל
וְלֹא-זָכַר הָדֶם-רַגְלָיו בְּיוֹם אָפוֹ.
יְלַע אֲדָנִי * לֹא חָמַל אֶת כָּל-נְאוֹת יַעֲקֹב
הָרָם בַּעֲבָרְתּוֹ מִבְּצָרֵי בִתְ-יְהוּדָה הַגִּיעַ

'and do to them as You did to me'].

Since the heathen nations possess neither כֹּהֲנִים, priests, nor Temple, exact retribution is impossible. Therefore, the *Midrash* notes, the entreaty means: 'Be as unforgiving with them as you were with me' (*Torah Temimah*).

The *Alshich* stresses לָמוּ, *them*, i.e. inflict my enemies *personally*, now, rather than wait to punish their

children or grandchildren, for my heart is sick with anxiety.

Lechem Dim'ah notes that here (unlike verse 12), Zion prays that the enemies be punished for rejoicing at her downfall. And lest anyone think that Zion might then rejoice at her enemies' downfall, the verse concludes: No, there is no room for rejoicing! My groans are many and my heart is sick.

II

1. אֵיכָה — *Alas!* [or: 'How can it be that... ' see commentary on 1:1].

יָעִיב — *Has clouded.* [lit. 'will cloud'] *Rashi*, translates 'has brought darkness' referring to the verse [I Kings 18:45] 'the sky became darkened with clouds.'

Ibn Ezra translates: 'has raised Zion up to the clouds' [and now cast her down], while the *Midrash* suggests it means 'smitten with pain', or 'made desolate.'

Lechem Dim'ah notes that יָעִיב 'will cloud' is in the future tense while everything else is in the past tense. He compares Zion to a person who has been smitten in every limb

of his body, and translates: אֵיכָה, 'how (i.e. where or which limb) will the Lord smite the daughter of Zion when His anger will be aroused? There is no part of her body which is not already bruised! He had already cast down from heaven to earth the glory of Israel [and broken thereby every bone in her body] and has not remembered His footstool [i.e. He has already brought about the ultimate punishment by destroying His Temple] on the day of His wrath.

בְּתִצִּיּוֹן — *daughter of Zion.* A poetic form, used to denote Jerusalem; its populace.

I inflict them as You inflicted me for all my transgressions. For my groans are many, and my heart is sick.

II 1-2 **A**las — The Lord in His anger has clouded the daughter of Zion. He cast down from heaven to earth the glory of Israel. He did not remember His footstool on the day of His wrath.

² The Lord consumed without pity all the dwellings of Jacob; in His anger He razed the fortresses of the

Kiflayim l'Sushiyah explains that 'daughter of Zion' refers to the Land; 'the glory of Israel' to its inhabitants.

הַשְׁלִיךְ מִשָּׁמַיִם אֶרֶץ תְּפָאֶרֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל — He cast down from heaven to earth the beauty of Israel. After having raised up the Jews to the uppermost heavens He cast them down to the nethermost depths — not gradually, but in one thrust (Rashi).

וְלֹא — זָכַר הַדָּם-רַגְלָיו — He did not remember His footstool, i.e. the בית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ, the Holy Temple (Midrash; Rashi).

The Midrash notes, homiletically, that הַדָּם, footstool, has the same spelling as הַדָּם, 'the blood', i.e. God in His anger preferred not to remember Abraham's blood of circumcision or the blood in which they wallowed in Egypt, and 'which they put on the doorposts there'.*

בְּיוֹם אָפוֹ — On the day of His wrath. [see Commentary, end of 1:12.]

2. אֶת כָּל-נְאוֹת יַעֲקֹב — All 'the dwellings of Jacob. [The translation 'dwellings,' for נְאוֹת (from the root נוה) follows Rashi; and most commentaries].

The Midrash homiletically translates נְאוֹת יַעֲקֹב, the 'glory' of Jacob — referring to the Torah Sages who were martyred during the Destruction.

הָרָס בְּעֵצָתוֹ מִבְּצָרֵי בְתִי-יְהוּדָה — He razed, in His anger, the fortresses of the daughter of Judah. The fortresses in Jerusalem were so strong as to be impenetrable, but the sins of the people caused them to fall — The Midrash notes that God Himself [not the enemy] in His anger [due to their sins] razed the fortresses of the daughter of Judah [see also Comm. to 1:3] (Midrash).

* Lechem Dimah quotes a touching Midrash:

During the Egyptian bondage, wives would help their husbands mix raw materials to produce the daily quota of bricks.

Once, a woman miscarried into the mixture. To avoid falling short of the required quota, she left the fetus in the mixture and made a brick from it. An angel brought it before God's throne exclaiming 'See what has become of Your children. Look and have pity on them!' God's compassion was aroused, and He resolved to take them out of Egypt. He placed that

פרק ב

7-2

2

7

וְשָׂרֵיהֶּ — *He profaned the kingdom and its leaders* [lit. 'officers']. — This refers to Israel which is called **מַמְלֶכֶת כֹּהֲנִים** a kingdom of priests (*Rashi*); also, to Zedekiah, King of Judah (*Midrash*).

'Leaders' refers *aggadically* to the celestial princes whom the wicked of Israel thought they could summon to their aid by invoking the שם המפדך, *Ineffable Name of God*. However, to prevent this, God changed the roles of these angels. When the enemy came, and the people invoked a particular angel, he replied, 'It is not within my power; my role has been changed' (*Midrash*).

The *Lechem Dim'ah* notes the sequence of punishment: first נָאוֹת יַעֲקֹב, the ten tribes of Israel [the other name for 'Jacob']; second, when there was still no repentance by the surviving Jews, God razed מְבִצְרֵי בֵּת יְהוּדָה, i.e. the *fortress of the daughter of Judah*, destroying the buildings and exiling the people. With the exile, and only then, חָלַל מַמְלָכָה וְשָׂרֶיהָ, *did He profane the kingdom and its leaders*.

3. גָּדַע — *He cut down.* i.e. the 'branches' only, leaving the root in-

tact so it could eventually grow back (*Lechem Dim'ah*).

לִּשְׂרָאֵל — *the dignity of Israel*. [The literal translation of קֶרֶן is 'horn'. Our translation follows the *Midrash* and *Targum*. Other commentators see 'horn' as symbolizing strength and the nation's resistance.]

The *Midrash* lists all the people and things whom Scriptures mention in connection with 'horns' [a term suggesting pride] and comments that all these 'horns' were conferred upon Israel, but were taken from them when they sinned and given to the other nations — to be returned "when the Holy One, blessed be He, raises aloft the 'horn' of *Mashiach*."

He – הָשִׁיב אַחֲרֵי יָמֵינוּ מִפְּנֵי אוֹיֵב
withdrew His right hand in the presence of the enemy. i.e. He refrained from doing battle for His children (Rashi).

The *Torah Temimah* compares the withdrawal of God's right hand when Israel sinned so grievously to His action in better times. When Israel pleases God, the verse says (in anthropomorphic terms): שְׂמָלוֹ רָאשֵׁי יוֹמֵינוּ תַּחֲבֹנֵנִי *'His left*

brick under His feet [so to speak], and whenever He looked at it He remembered their suffering, and His compassion for the Jews was aroused.

This verse tells us that now, before the Destruction of the Temple, God's anger was aroused beyond compassion, השליך משמים ארץ תפארת ישראל, *He cast down from heaven this brick which symbolized Israel's glory, preferring not to remember this brick which had served as His footstool.*

daughter of Judah down to the ground; He profaned the kingdom and its leaders.

³ He cut down, in fierce anger, all the dignity of Israel; He withdrew His right hand in the presence of the enemy. He burned through Jacob like a flaming fire, consuming on all sides.

⁴ He bent His bow like an enemy. His right hand poised like a foe, He slew all who were of pleasant

hand is under my head, and His right hand embraces me' [Song of Songs 8:3], but when Israel does not please God 'He withdraws His right hand.'

The Midrash notes that 'when the enemy entered Jerusalem, they took the mighty men of Israel and bound their hands behind them. The Holy One, Blessed be He, saw their distress, so He, too — anthropomorphically — withdrew His right hand behind Him' [i.e. symbolizing His endurance of the many indignities heaped upon His glory by the heathens, as if His hands, so to speak, were behind His back, powerless to avenge] (*Yefe Anef*).

Lechem Dim'ah suggests that since the reference to a 'right hand' follows the phrase קַרְן יִשְׂרָאֵל, 'horn of Israel,' the reference is to the 'right hand of Israel,' i.e. God turned away Israel's right hand, the symbol of its strength, so that it would be unable to withstand the enemy.

וַיַּעַר בְּיָעֶקֶב — He burned through Jacob. The Midrash comments: 'When punishment comes into the world, no one feels it as much as [the patriarch] Jacob; and when there is good in the world no one rejoices as much as Jacob,' i.e. Jacob feels it more keenly than the other patriarchs because he experienced

the most tribulations in raising his family (*Torah Temimah*).

אֲכָלָה עָלֵיהֶם — Consuming on all sides. 'On all sides,' but not yet in Jerusalem itself. God was waiting for the Jews to repent. He exiled the ten tribes of Israel, withheld His assistance, and threatened extinction — each time trying to make Judah repent, but they did not. Only in the following verses do we find God 'venting His anger' directly at Jerusalem and the Temple (*Alshich*).

4. [In this verse HASHEM is depicted, not only in His passive role as One who withdrew His support, but as One who actively participated in Israel's destruction].

דָּרַךְ קֶשֶׁתוֹ כְּאוֹיֵב — He bent his bow like an enemy. Mighty archers draw their bows with the aid of their feet; hence the use of the word דָּרַךְ 'He stepped' [i.e. into the bow] (*Rashi*).

HASHEM, acting through His מִדָּת הַדִּין, Attribute of Justice did not go to the extreme in punishing the Jews [see *Comm.* end of 1:8, s.v. יָרַב]. 'אוֹיֵב' 'He is an enemy', is not written here, but כְּאוֹיֵב, like an enemy (*Midrash*).

נָצַב יְמִינוֹ — His right hand poised. [The same right hand which He had always used to shield Israel].

פרק ב
ה'ו כל מחמדי-עין באהל בת-ציון שפך
פאש חמתו.
ה ה'ה אדני | באויב בלע ישראל בלע כל-
ארמונותיה שחת מבצרי וירב בבת-
יהודה תאניה ואניה.
ו ויחמס בגן שכו שחת מעדו שפח יהנה |
בציון מועד ושבת וינאץ בועם-אפו
מלך וכהן.

He slew all who were of pleasant appearance [lit. 'pleasant to the eye.']

Rav Tanchum b. Yirmiyah said, this refers to the children who were as dear to their parents as the apple of their eye. The Rabbis said, this refers to the members of the Sanhedrin who were as dear to Israel as the apple of their eye (*Midrash*).

In the tent of the daughter of Zion. 'Tent' is used because when fire touches it, it burns instantly (*Ibn Ezra*).

5. The Lord became like an enemy ... After all of the above, the Jews did not repent. Still, God restrained Himself. The verse likens His anger to that of an enemy, but He did not become an enemy. Also, he consumed Israel, but not all of Israel; He consumed all her citadels; and thus vented His anger by directing His actions on wood and stone' [i.e. on inanimate objects rather than on human lives] so as to avoid the total slaughter of the Jews themselves (*Palgei Mayim*).

Moaning and mourning i.e. the most intense afflictions (*Midrash*).

[The translation attempts to convey the poetic rhythm of the Hebrew 'ta'aniah va'aniah.' Rashi translates 'pain and moaning.']

The *Lechem Dim'ah* notes that while the kingdom of Judah was intact, the earlier tragedy was not as keenly felt in the Land. When Judah, too, was exiled, the perception of the affliction was double, hence 'mourning and moaning.'

6. He stripped His Booth like a garden. 'His Booth,' related to *Sukkah* (*Ibn Ezra*), i.e. His dwelling place (*Rashi*); — the 'Holy of Holies' (*Palgei Mayim*).

The *Midrash* notes that the word for 'Booth', שכו [*sukko*] can be read שכו [*shukko*] 'His appeasement' i.e. When He stripped [Jerusalem] as one strips a garden, שכה חמתו של, God's wrath was appeased [having vented His anger 'on wood and stone' (see *comm.* to verse 5, and *Overview*).

— like a garden, i.e. as one cuts vegetables in a garden. Jerusalem became like a garden which had

appearance. In the tent of the daughter of Zion He poured out His wrath like fire.

⁵ The Lord became like an enemy, He consumed Israel; He consumed all her citadels, He destroyed its fortresses. He increased within the daughter of Judah moaning and mourning.

⁶ He stripped His Booth like a garden, He destroyed His place of assembly. HASHEM made Zion oblivious of festival and Sabbath, and in His fierce anger He spurned King and priest.

been deprived of its water (*Midrash*), [and nothing looks as desolate as a garden stripped of its plants.]

שַׁחַת מִצֵּדוֹ — He destroyed His place of assembly, i.e. the קֹדֶשׁ הַקְּדוֹשִׁים, the Holy of Holies where God 'presents Himself' [נִוֶּעַד] to His children [*Exodus* 25:22] (*Rashi*).

Another interpretation of שַׁחַת מִצֵּדוֹ is 'He abolished the תְּמִידִים, regular and the additional Sabbath and festival offerings. Therefore, festival and Sabbath — the occasions of the offerings — were forgotten in Zion' (*Lechem Dimah*).

שָׁכַח ה' בְּצִיּוֹן מוֹעֵד וְשַׁבָּת — HASHEM made Zion oblivious of festival and Sabbath. [i.e. as a result of God's destruction of the Temple and sacrifices, it was as if the festivals and Sabbath were forgotten].

[מוֹעֵד has two meanings. The word appears twice in this verse and each time with a different meaning — 'Meeting place' (referring to the Temple); and 'festival'.]

מֶלֶךְ וְכֹהֵן — King and priest. Referring to Zedekiah [whose children were slaughtered in his presence, and who was himself bound in

brass chains and carried off to Babylon (*II Kings* 26:16)]; and to Serayah [the בִּזְיָן הָרֹאשׁ, the 'chief priest' who was brought before the king of Babylon and slaughtered there (*II Kings* 25; 18:21)] (*Midrash*).

Lechem Dim'ah suggests an alternative thematic interpretation of this verse. In response to the Jews' multitude of transgressions, God removed their means of approaching Him to seek forgiveness and atonement. First He destroyed שְׁכֵנִי, His Temple, symbolic of HASHEM'S presence and compassion on earth, removing His 'shade' [i.e. protection] from them. Next He abolished מִצֵּדוֹ, the offerings which had to be offered 'at their appointed times' and which cleanse Israel from its sins and atones for them. The lack of offerings interfered with the proper observance of מוֹעֵד וְשַׁבָּת, festival and Sabbath, which, if perfectly observed could have averted the exile and brought about their redemption — instead, they were 'forgotten' in Israel. Finally, climaxing His anger, He spurned those who could have prayed most effectively for the people — מֶלֶךְ וְכֹהֵן, the King and priest.

פֶּרֶק ב ו זָנַח אֶדְנִי | מִזְבְּחוֹ נֶאֱרַם מִקֹּדְשׁוֹ הַסְגִּיר
 בְּיַד-אוֹיֵב חוֹמַת אֶרְמְנוֹתֶיהָ קוֹל גָּתָנוּ
 בְּבֵית-יְהוָה כְּיוֹם מוֹעֵד.
 ח חָשַׁב יְהוָה | לְהַשְׁחִית חוֹמַת בֵּת-צִיּוֹן
 נָטָה קוֹ לֹא-הִשִּׁיב יָדוֹ מִבִּלְעַ וַיֹּאבֶל-חָל
 וְחוֹמָה יַחְדָּו אִמָּלְלוּ.
 ט יִטְעֶנּוּ בָאָרֶץ שְׁעָרֶיהָ אֶבֶד וְשֹׁפֵר בְּרִיחֶיהָ
 מַלְכָּה וְשָׂרֶיהָ בְּגוֹיִם אֵין תּוֹרָה גַּם-

7. זָנַח אֶדְנִי — *The Lord rejected His altar. The Holy One, Blessed be He, said to Israel: 'Do you provoke Me because you rely on the sacrifices which you offer to Me? Here, have them! They are thrown in your face' (Midrash).*

חוֹמַת אֶרְמְנוֹתֶיהָ — *The walls of her citadels, i.e. the walls of the Temple (Ibn Yachyah).*

וְקוֹל גָּתָנוּ — *They raised a clamor. i.e. When the heathens entered the Temple they turned their faces upwards, and blasphemed and reviled [as though they were victorious against HASHEM] (Midrash).*

The *Midrash* continues, that in punishment for that 'clamorous' blasphemy, Babylon ultimately fell.

כְּיוֹם מוֹעֵד — *As though it were a festival day. i.e. the heathens clamored joyously at the destruction of the Temple, matching the fervor of Israel's joyous chants on its holidays (Alshich; Rashi).*

8. חָשַׁב ה' לְהַשְׁחִית — *HASHEM had resolved to destroy. The Midrash explains that the resolve was not new — but an old one, as it is written: כִּי עַל-אֶפְי וְעַל-חֲמַתִּי הָיְתָה לִי הָעִיר הַזֹּאת לְמִן-הַיּוֹם אֲשֶׁר בָּנוּ*

אוֹתָהּ, 'For this city [Jerusalem] has been to Me a provocation of My fury and My anger from the day that they built it (Jer. 32:31) [and God, in a sense, 'restrained Himself' until then].

Alshich views this verse as a continuation of the preceding verse, i.e., the enemy was able to conquer Jerusalem only because 'HASHEM had previously resolved to destroy the wall of Jerusalem'.

וְנָטָה קוֹ — *He stretched out the line. i.e. of Judgment in retribution for our transgressions' (Rashi).*

[The phrase alludes to God's thorough preconceived plan of destruction, metaphorically employing a 'measuring line' to ensure precision].

חָל וְחוֹמָה — *Rampart and wall. 'The low wall and the high wall (Pesachim 86a; Rashi); i.e., the area surrounding the wall of the city (Ibn Ezra).*

The verse also suggests that originally 'HASHEM had resolved to destroy only the wall of Zion, but, once the destruction was underway, together with the wall He destroyed the 'innocent' rampart. As the sages said: 'Woe to

⁷ The Lord rejected His altar, abolished His Sanctuary; He handed over to the enemy the walls of her citadels. They raised a clamor in the House of HASHEM as though it were a festival.

⁸ HASHEM resolved to destroy the wall of the daughter of Zion. He stretched out the line and did not relent from devouring. Indeed, He made rampart and wall mourn; together they languished.

⁹ Her gates have sunk into the earth, He has utterly shattered her bars; Her King and officers are among the heathen, there is no Torah; her prophets, too,

the wicked; Woe to his neighbor!'
(*Lechem Dim'ah*).

9. טבעו בארץ שעריה — *Her gates have sunk into the ground.* According to the *midrash* the gates sunk into the ground [i.e. miraculously, and were not destroyed by the enemy] because [when Solomon brought the ארון הברית, Ark of the Covenant, into Jerusalem] the gates paid honor to the Ark by rising to allow the Ark to enter [*Shabbos* 30a.]. *Rashi* adds that the gates were invulnerable to the enemy because they were the handiwork of King David [*Sotah* 9a.].

Minchas Shay explains that the ט, *Tes*, of טבעו, *sunk*, is small to allude to ט, the Ninth, of Av when the Temple was destroyed.

אבר ושבר — *He had utterly shattered.* [lit. 'He (i.e. God) destroyed and broke.']

מלכה ושריה בגוים — *Her King and [her] officers are among the heathens.* [lit. 'the nations.']. The gates were rewarded for giving honor to the Torah; the King and officers who did not honor the Torah,

however, enjoyed no such protection. They were exiled among the heathens (*Lechem Dim'ah*).

אין תורה — *There is no Torah* — i.e. no one to provide religious instruction (*Rashi*), [All the most important people — King, princes, priests — in whose hands lay the religious administration of the country, are either gone or not functioning.]

Most commentators and the *Midrash* attach this clause to the preceding and translate: 'Her King and her officers are among the heathen where there is no Torah.' Hence, the *Midrash* concludes: 'should a person tell you there is חכמה, wisdom, among the nations, believe it; but if he tells you there is Torah among the nations, do not believe it.'

The *Midrash Lekach Tov* explains the tragedy as being greater because they were exiled to heathen nations where all commandments could not be observed properly.

The *Targum* translates: 'Her King and great men were exiled among the nations because they did not observe the words of the Torah, as if they did not receive it at Sinai.'

פרק ב נְבִיאִיהָ לֹא־מָצְאוּ חֲזוֹן מִיהוּהָ.
 יִיב יֹשְׁבוּ לָאָרֶץ יָדְמוּ זָקְנֵי בִתְצִיּוֹן הָעֶלְוֹ
 עָפָר עַל־רֹאשָׁם חָגְרוּ שָׁקִים הוֹרִידוּ
 לָאָרֶץ רֹאשׁוֹן בְּתוֹלַת יְרוּשָׁלַם.
 יא כָּלוּ בְדִמְעוֹת עֵינֵי חֲמֻרְמָרוּ מְעֵי נִשְׁפָּף
 לָאָרֶץ כְּבִדִּי עַל־שָׁכָר בִּתְעֵמִי בַעֲטָף
 עוֹלָל וַיּוֹנֵק בְּרַחְבוֹת קָרְיָה.
 יב לֹא־מָתָם יֹאמְרוּ אִיהָ דָּגָן וַיֵּין בְּהִתְעַטְּפָם
 בְּחָלָל בְּרַחְבוֹת עִיר בְּהִשְׁתַּפֵּף נַפְשָׁם

Her prophets, too. The Midrash interprets גם, too, to include the false prophets, who also found no sign from heaven.

Find no vision from HASHEM. i.e. their prophetic powers were taken from them (Targum).

[Also, they were saddened by the exile, and 'Prophecy dwells only amidst joy' (Tanchumah)].

10. In this verse, the prophet depicts the elders — who no longer have a wordly occupation to keep them occupied, and who have suffered and endured so much — mourning for Zion. They have no words, no prayers, only silent resignation. Note also the poetic contrast between the זָקֵנִים elders, and בְּתוּלוֹת, maidens, as depicting the extremes of the population spectrum (Kol Yaakov; Lechem Dim'ah).

Sit on the ground in silence. [The Biblical classic form of mourning includes strewing dust on the head, wearing sackcloth, and bowing the head].*

This verse is cited as a basis for the Halachic custom of sitting on the ground on Tisha b'Av. The 12th century Sefer haEshkol says: 'After the final meal, we go to the synagogue without shoes and sit on the ground as it is written 'sit on the ground in silence.'

11. [In a personal interjection of special grief, the prophet laments the tragic sight of children languishing from hunger in the streets].

My eyes fail with tears. [i.e. 'I have no tears left, from excessive weeping'].

The Midrash comments that of all tears, those shed for the death of a grown child are worst.

* Rashi refers to the Midrash which relates that Zedekiah violated an oath he had made to Nebuchadnezzar by rebelling against him.

Nebuchadnezzar took up residence in Daphne of Antioch and summoned the Sanhedrin. When he saw that they were all men of imposing appearance, he seated them on seats of gold and said, 'Expound to me your Torah, chapter by chapter and translate it for me.

When they reached the chapter of נִזְרִים, vows (Numbers 30:3) he asked: 'If a person

II find no vision from HASHEM.

10-12 ¹⁰ The elders of the daughter of Zion sit on the ground in silence; they have strewn ashes on their heads, and wear sackcloth. The maidens of Jerusalem have bowed their heads to the ground.

¹¹ My eyes fail with tears, my insides churn; my liver spills on the ground at the shattering of my people, while babes and sucklings swoon in the streets of the city.

¹² They say to their mothers, 'Where is bread and wine?' as they swoon like a dying man in the streets of the town; as their soul ebbs away in their mothers'

יָמָיו מְצִי — My insides [lit. 'innards'] churn. (See Commentary to same phrase in 1:20).

Lechem Dim'ah points out that since 'my eyes fail with tears' and I can't relieve my anxieties by crying, I have to restrain myself. Therefore, my very 'insides churn and my liver spills to the ground' from aggravation.

וְשֶׁפֶר לִאֲרֵץ כְּבִדִּי — My liver spills on the ground.

[כְּבִדִּי, 'liver' is used to express grief and deep emotion. In this context, the phrase means 'I can no longer restrain myself'].

בְּצֶטֶף עוֹלָל וְיוֹנֵק — While babes and sucklings swoon. The simile is especially poignant because young children usually have all their needs catered to them at home. Now they are depicted as publicly swooning from hunger (*Kiflayim l'Sushiyah*).

12. לֶאֱמָתָם יֹאמְרוּ — They [i.e. the swooning children mentioned in the last verse] say to their mothers.

אֵיזָה רֶגֶן נֵיִן — Where is bread [lit. 'grain'] and wine? The translation 'bread' follows the Midrash).

It is obvious that fine bread and good wine was not available during the siege, and the verse could not be suggesting that the children seriously expected to receive these foods during the famine; the children would have been satisfied with any morsels of food to still their hunger pangs. Rather, as they swooned from hunger, they beseeched their mothers, remembering their past comforts, and saying 'What happened to the fine food which you used to feed us?' (*Lechem Dim'ah*).

כִּדְשֵׁתָפֶר נַפְשָׁם — As their soul ebbs away.

desires to retract a vow, can he do so?' They answered: '[Yes,] by going to a Sage who will absolve him.'

'If so,' Nebuchadnezzar said, 'You must have absolved Zedekiah from the oath which he swore to me!'

He commanded that the Sages be seated on the ground. Their hair was bound to the tails of their horses, and they were dragged about.

פרק ב אל-חיק אמתם.

מה-אעידך מה ארמה-לך הבת ירושלם
 מה אשנה-לך ואנחמך בתולת בת-ציון
 כִּי-גָדוֹל כֵּיִם שִׁבְרָךְ מִי יִרְפָּא-לָךְ.
 נביאִיךָ חֲזוֹ לָךְ שָׂא וְתַפֵּל וְלֹא-גָלוּ עַל-
 עוֹנֶךָ לְהָשִׁיב שְׁבִיתֶךָ וַיַּחֲזוּ לָךְ מַשָּׂאוֹת
 שָׂא וּמְדוּחִים.

Rav Almosnino translates 'as they pour out their soul', i.e. 'as the heathens slaughtered the children in their mothers laps, before their very eyes.'

אל-חיק אמתם — In their mother's laps [or 'bosoms']. In the most maternal of positions, where they received nourishment as infants — now their soul ebbs away (Kiflayim l'Sushiyah).*

13. מה-אעידך מה ארמה-לך — With what shall I bear witness for you? To what can I compare you? i.e. what instance can I cite of any other nation that suffered a calamity equal to yours? (Zohar; Alshich).

The Midrash, interpreting the verb אעידך 'witnesss', by its other meaning, 'warn': translates: [God said]: 'How many prophets did I send to 'warn' you [of the consequences of your evil ways?]' i.e. what more could I have done for you? (Torah Temimah).

The Midrash explains the מה ארמה לך, 'To which nation have I likened you,' — which other nation have I redeemed with a mighty hand,

bringing ten plagues upon its enemies, split the sea, caused manna to descend, made quails to swarm and raised a well of water? Which other nation have I enveloped in clouds of glory, brought before Mount Sinai, and given My Torah? (Mattanos Kehunah)

מה אשנה-לך ואנחמך — To what can I liken you to comfort you. i.e. 'whose suffering and circumstances can be likened to yours, so that you can be comforted by the comparison?' (Lechem Dim'ah).

Human nature is such that in times of trouble one finds comfort in hearing of others who experienced similar tribulations (Rashi).

כִּי-גָדוֹל כֵּיִם שִׁבְרָךְ מִי יִרְפָּא-לָךְ — Your ruin is as vast as the sea; who can heal you? i.e. The state of ruination in which Israel finds itself is so vast that its 'healing' cannot be accomplished by natural means. Only God, to Whom the Zohar refers as 'Mi' [מי='Who,' i.e. 'Who' will heal you] — is capable of healing of exiled, broken Israel (Lechem Dimah).

* The formerly affluent daughters of Zion used to walk around the streets of Jerusalem staring at each other languishing from hunger and moaning: 'the ravages of hunger are hard to accept; I cannot bear them.' Supporting one another they would search through the city for food. Finding nothing to eat they would clutch at the house pillars and fall dead.

13-14 ¹³With what shall I bear witness for you? To what can I compare you, O daughter of Jerusalem? To what can I liken you to comfort you, O maiden daughter of Zion? — Your ruin is as vast as the sea; who can heal you?

¹⁴ Your prophets envisioned for you vanity and foolishness, and they did not expose your iniquity to bring you back in repentance; they prophesied to you oracles of vanity and deception.

The *Midrash* states homiletically that 'He to Whom [מי] you uttered a song at the Red Sea will heal you.'

Alshich notes that Zion's ruin is compared to the sea, because like the waves of the ocean, which crash one upon the other, Zion's troubles came incessantly, one on the heels of the other.

14. נְבִיאֶיךָ — Your prophets. i.e. those prophets — whom you believed to have the most spiritual and moral insight — prophesied falsely, and 'whitewashed' your iniquities, soothing you into self-righteousness by indulging in deceptive oracles (*Rav Arama*).

Many commentators view this phrase as a continuation of the previous verse, and translate thus: מי ירפא לך, who can heal you? — Your very own prophets misled you! (*Alshich; Lechem Dim'ah; Ibn Yachya; Kiflayim l'Sushiyah*).

וְהִפֵּל לְךָ שָׂוָא וְהִפֵּל — Envisioned for you vanity and foolishness — by falsely prophesying that Nebu-

chadnezzar would never enter Jerusalem, or that the Temple would never be destroyed (*Alshich; Ibn Yachya*).

Midrashically, תַּפְּלָה is related to תַּפְּלוּת, idolatry, i.e. they envisioned idolatrous visions.

וְלֹא-גִלוּ עַל-עֲוֹנְךָ — And they did not expose your iniquity by openly rebuking you (*Rashi*). The prophets placed veils upon your face [i.e. allowing you to pretend that your sins were invisible].

לְהָשִׁיב שְׁבוּתְךָ — To bring you back in repentance. This translation follows *Targum; Ibn Yachya; Rashi*; 'to straighten your waywardness,' [the implication being that had the prophets properly carried out their duties and rebuked the people to the point of whole-hearted repentance, the Destruction would have been averted].

וַיַּחֲזִיקוּ לְךָ מִשְׁאוֹת שָׂוָא וּמְדוּחִים — They prophesied to you oracles of vanity and deception. i.e. they enticed you

Now their infants who still nursed came crawling after them on their hands and knees. Each child, recognizing his own mother came and put his mouth to her expecting to draw milk.

But there was no milk to be drawn, and so, driven into a frenzy, the babies would die in their mothers' bosoms; as depicted in the verse 'as their soul ebbs away in their mothers' bosoms.'

פרק ב טו סָפְקוּ עָלֶיךָ כְּפִים כָּל-עַבְרֵי דָרְךָ שָׂרְקוּ
וַיִּנְעוּ רֹאשָׁם עַל-בֵּית יְרוּשָׁלַם הַזֹּאת
הָעִיר שִׁיאָמְרוּ כָלִילַת יָפִי מְשֹׁשׁ לְכָל-
הָאָרֶץ.

טו פָּצוּ עָלֶיךָ פִּיהֶם כָּל-אֲיִבֶיךָ שָׂרְקוּ
וַיִּחְרְקוּ-שֵׁן אָמְרוּ בְלָעְנוּ אֶךְ זֶה הַיּוֹם
שִׁקְוִינָהוּ מִצָּאֵנוּ רָאִינוּ.

יז עֲשֵׂה יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר זָמַם בַּצֵּעַ אִמְרָתוֹ אֲשֶׁר

from Me (*Rashi*); from the right path (*Ibn Ezra*).

The *Alshich* concludes: 'Not only did your prophets not reprimand you for your transgressions — they actually led you astray from God with their vain and deceptive prophecies. Indeed, who can heal such a nation? And if you expect to derive comfort from passers-by who will see your suffering and commiserate with you, you are sadly mistaken' . . . [see commentary of *Alshich* next verse].

15. סָפְקוּ עָלֶיךָ כְּפִים . . . שָׂרְקוּ וַיִּנְעוּ . . . רֹאשָׁם — *Clap hands at you. . . they hiss and wag their head* — upon witnessing your disaster (*Kiflayim l'Sushiyah*).

... In mock and derision, not over your loss, Jerusalem, but for themselves, as the Sages proclaimed: Had the heathens known how much they would lose by destroying the Temple, they would not have done it. The Divine blessing that had rested upon Israel and, through it, upon the entire world, left with the Destruction (*Alshich*).

[*Rashi* implies that this verse refers to a sincere manifestation of grief which one naturally expresses upon seeing such a precipitous

decline in someone who was once great. Perhaps, in this light, we can differentiate between this verse and the next. In this verse the prophet laments the fact that Zion's state is so lamentable that 'all' neutral passers-by will be sincerely moved to commiserate at the great loss. The next verse, however, speaks of the confirmed אוֹיֵב, *enemy*, who jeers and gnashes his teeth, openly displaying joy at her present condition].

... הַזֹּאת הָעִיר. — *Could this be the city. . . ?* [This is what the passers-by are moved to say, remembering her past glory, and seeing her in her present state of destruction].

... An exclamation of disbelief, as הַזֹּאת נָעֲמִי, 'could this be Naomi?' [*Ruth 1:19*] (*Midrash Lekach Tov*).

Lechem Dim'ah suggests, alternatively, that this phrase could be an interjected lament uttered by the prophet rather than the passers-by. 'Is this what the City has come to? To be the subject of scorn?'

— כָּלִילַת יָפִי מְשֹׁשׁ לְכָל-הָאָרֶץ — *Perfect in Beauty, Joy of All the Earth.* i.e. encompassing all forms of beauty (*Kiflayim l'Soshiyah*).

[The phrase is nearly identical with the description of the city in

15 All who pass along the way clap hands at you;
15-17 they hiss and wag their head at the daughter of Jerusalem: "Could this be the city that was called Perfect in Beauty, Joy of All the Earth?"

16 All your enemies jeered at you; they hiss and gnash their teeth. They say: "We have devoured her! Indeed, this is the day we longed for; we have actually seen it!"

17 HASHEM has done what He planned; He carried out His decree which He ordained long ago; He

Psalms 50:2, מְבַלְל יָפִי, perfect in beauty; and *Psalms* 48:3 מְשׁוֹשׁ בְּלִי-הָאָרֶץ, joy of all the earth].

16. פָּצוּ — They jeered. [Lamentations is written in the form of an alphabetical acrostic, but in this chapter, and also in chapters 3 and 4, the verse beginning with פ, pe, precedes that of ע, ayin. Pe means mouth; and ayin means eye]: Rashi notes, 'why did he place the pe before the ayin because they [i.e. the Spies — (*Sanhedrin* 104b; see also *comm.* to 2:2)] spoke with their mouths what they had not seen with their eyes' [thus putting one before the other].

According to *Lechem Dim'ah*, Rashi is referring [not to the Spies as in *Sanhedrin*, 104b, but] to the enemies who cast diatribes at Israel long before the actual Destruction took place. Hence, the sequence of the verses: First, פָּצוּ All your enemies jeered at you, then, עָשָׂה ה' HASHEM has done . . . has devastated.

כָּל-אֹיְבֶיךָ — All your enemies i.e. those who always wished for your downfall.

אָמְרוּ בִלְעָנוּ — We have devoured [lit. 'swallowed'] her. [The 'her' is

not in the Hebrew, but is implied in the context]. The commentators stress 'we,' i.e. the heathens attributed Zion's downfall to their own excessive might, not to God's intervention. Therefore, the next verse attributes the Destruction to God: 'HASHEM has done what He planned' (*Lechem Dim'ah*).

וְהָיָה הַיּוֹם שְׂקוּיָהּ — This is the day we longed [lit. 'hoped'] for. i.e. the Ninth of Av, the day pre-destined for retribution (*Alshich*).

מָצָאוּנוּ רְאִינוּ — We have actually seen it. [lit. 'we have found, we have seen:']

The *ARIZAL* explains that the enemy had hoped for the day when they could burn the Temple themselves. They were disappointed because 'we found, we saw' i.e. they found that God had already sent down the fire that burned the Temple [see commentary 1:13].

17. עָשָׂה ה' אֲשֶׁר זָמַם — HASHEM has done what He planned.

Although most human plans are never executed, God's resolve was carried through in its entirety (*Lechem Dim'ah*).

פָּרָק ב' צִנָּה מִימֵי-קֶדֶם הָרֶס וְלֹא חָמַל וַיִּשְׁמַח
 יחִיט עֲלֶיךָ אוֹיֵב הָרִים קֶרֶן צָרִיךְ.
 יח צָעַק לָבָם אֶל-אֲדֹנָי חוֹמַת בֵּת-צִיּוֹן
 הוֹרִידִי בְנַחֵל דְּמָעָה יוֹמָם וְלַיְלָה אֶל-
 תַּתְּנִי פּוֹגֶת לָךְ אֶל-תֹּדֶם בֵּת-עֵינֶךָ.
 יט בְּלִילָה יט קוֹמִי | רְנִי בְלִילָה לְרֹאשׁ אֲשֶׁמְרוֹת שְׂפָכִי

אשר צנה מימי-קדם — Which He ordained long ago [lit. 'which He commanded from ancient days']

According to Rashi this refers to the warnings in the Torah of the dire results of disobedience, (e.g. Leviticus 26:27).

Ibn Ezra [in *Perush haTaamim*] is of the opinion that the reference is to the messages of the early prophets. [See also *Commentary* beginning of 2:8].

וישמח עליך אויב — He let the enemy rejoice over you. God Himself rejoices with Israel when good befalls them; but when anything bad befalls them He lets others do the rejoicing (*Midrash*).

הרים קרן צריך — He raised the pride [lit. 'horn'] of your foes. [i.e. He gave power, dignity and victory to the enemy; in contrast to 2:3 ... נָדַע, בל קרן ישראל, He cut down ... the dignity ('horn') of Israel.]

18. צעק לבם אל-ה' — Their heart cried out to the Lord. [The subject and continuity of this verse are ambiguous. The commentators vary]:

Lechem Dim'ah is of the opinion that the prophet is addressing the *Shechinah* and intimating that Israel has done its part by sincerely crying out to God. Now he beseeches חומת בית ציון 'the wall of the

daughter of Zion' i.e. the *Shechinah*, the protector ['wall'] of Zion, also to shed incessant tears and bring about Redemption.

Lechem Dim'ah attributes to Ibn Ezra that the subject is the enemy, and thus follows the last verse: 'He exalted the horn of your foes, because thinking God was on their side, they [i.e. the enemy] cried out to Him. The prophet continues by advising the Jews themselves to pray to God now (*Kiflayim l'Sushiyah*).

Ibn Shu'ib suggests that the clause reverts back to the *babes and sucklings* in verses 11-12, with verses 13-17 being parenthetical.

According to other commentators, the prophet informs us that Zion, realizing the real Cause of its trouble, turned its heart in prayer to God. But before quoting the prayer (verses 20-22), he makes a dramatic, passionate plea to the stricken people of the city, saying that it indeed behooves them to pour out their hearts to HASHEM unceasingly and unrestrainedly.

חומת בית-ציון — O Wall, of the daughter of Zion. [the 'wall' figuratively represents Jerusalem and its inhabitants; or according to *Lechem Dim'ah* (see above) it represents the *Shechinah*, the 'protector' of the Jews].

II devastated without pity. He let the enemy rejoice
18-19 over you; He raised the pride of your foes.

¹⁸ Their heart cried out to the Lord. O Wall of the daughter of Zion: Shed tears like a river, day and night; give yourself no respite, do not let your eyes be still.

¹⁹ Arise, cry out at night in the beginning of the

הורירי כנהל דמעה — *Shed tears like a river.* [The Hebrew has דמעה, in singular.] i.e. each tear should be like a river (*Alshich*).

אֶל־תִּתְּנִי פִּנּוּת לךְ אֶל־תִּרְדָּם בְּתִעֲנִיךְ — *Give yourself no respite, do not let your eyes [lit. 'pupils'] be still.*

The greatest sin of all is that we, in our time, stopped mourning properly for Jerusalem. I am convinced that, in punishment for this, our exile has lasted so long, we have never been able to find rest, and we are always being persecuted. Historically, whenever we found some security in any of the lands of our exile, we forgot Jerusalem and did not place it at the foremost place in our minds' (*Rav Yaakov Emden*).

19. [This verse is a continuation of the last, in which the prophet exhorts the sufferers to pray, unrestrainedly to HASHEM].

קוּמִי רִנִּי — *Arise cry out.* [The word רִנִּי has two meanings: 'rejoice', and 'cry in prayer' as in: לְשִׂמְעָ אֶל־הַרְנָה, 'to listen to the cry and to the prayer' (I Kings 8:28); also, הִקְשִׁיבָה אֶל רִנִּי 'attend to my cry' (*Psalms 142:7*)].

[The concept of רנה, crying, is to be understood more as self-

meditation, applicable at night, as contrasted with צַעֵק vociferous crying out, applicable during the day as in the last verse.

The *Targum*, interpreting רנה as rejoicing [in Torah-study], translates: Arise, exiled Israel, and engage yourself in study of *Mishnah* (Oral Law) [as an effective form of supplication to God] (*Alshich*).

בְּלֵילָה — *At night.* [see *Commentary* on 1:2]. The prophet, having exhorted her in the last verse to 'shed tears like a river day and night' obviously realized that sleep is necessary. Nevertheless, he warned, 'Even when you go to sleep, be sure to get up at intervals and pray' (*Lechem Dim'ah*).

Midrash Lekach Tov comments that 'night' refers to the night of *Tisha b'Av* which should be observed annually as an eve of weeping and lamentation.

The כתב, written form of the 'night', is ליל, and refers to the earlier part of the evening, which is the ראש אַשְׁמֶרוֹת, *beginning of the first two watches*, and is the most effective time (*Lechem Dim'ah*).

לְרֹאשׁ אַשְׁמֶרוֹת — *In the beginning of the watches*, the night being divided into three equal 'watches' (*Rashi*).

בָּמִים לִבְךָ נִכַּח פָּנֵי אֲדֹנָי שְׂאֵי אֵלָיו
בְּפִיךָ עַל-נַפְשׁ עוֹלָלֶיךָ הָעֲטוּפִים בְּרָעַב
בְּרֹאשׁ כָּל-חוּצוֹת.

נ רֵאָה יְהוָה וַהֲבִיטָה לָּמִי עוֹלָלָתְךָ כֹּה אִם-
תֹּאכְלֶנָּה נָשִׁים פְּרִיָם עָלָי טַפְחִים אִם-
יִהְרֹג בְּמִקְדָּשׁ אֲדֹנָי כֹּהֵן וְנָבִיא.

Pour out your heart like water in the Presence of the Lord. And confess your guilt (Ibn Yachya).

Wherever HASHEM'S name appears as אֲדֹנָי, it refers to the Shechinah. Therefore, 'first pour out your heart like water at the 'departure' of the Shechinah, and then pray for the life of your infants, i.e. for your own needs (*Lechem Dim'ah*).

Whoever prays at night, the Shechinah 'faces' [i.e. is responsive to] him, because his heart is then free from worldly cares and his prayers are sincere (*Midrash Lekach Tov*).

Since the שְׁעַרֵי דְמָעוֹת, 'gates of weeping', were never closed [*Berachos 32b*], the prophet assured them that sincere weeping would reach ה' פָּנֵי ה', the 'Presence of the Lord' [see *Comm. 1:2 s.v. וְדָמָתָה*] (*Yismach Moshe*).

שְׂאֵי אֵלָיו בְּפִיךָ — *Lift up your hands to Him* — [in supplication].

Your hands — which have shed innocent blood and acted treacherously (*Ibn Yachya*).

עַל-נַפְשׁ עוֹלָלֶיךָ — *For the life [lit. 'soul'] of your infants.*

Most commentators understand 'children' literally, referring to the starving children in verses 11 and 12. *Midrash Lekach Tov* seems to

understand it as the swooning children [i.e. citizens] of personified Jerusalem — who have been exiled throughout the world. בְּרֹאשׁ כָּל חוּצוֹת, in foreign heathen countries [בְּחוּץ לְאֶרֶץ] throughout the world.

Lechem Dim'ah interprets the verse: 'Pour out your heart like water in the Presence of the Lord', and if that is ineffective because your merits are insufficient, then *Lift up your hands to Him* as if you were praying for the life of your innocent infants who swoon, etc.

20. [In this verse, the thoughts of the prophet revert to HASHEM].

לָּמִי עוֹלָלָתְךָ כֹּה — *Whom you have treated so, i.e. 'to whom else, besides us, have You ever dealt out such harsh punishment?' (Alshich; Lechem Dim'ah; Palgei Mayim; Kiflayim l'Sushiyah).*

Some commentators suggest an alternate interpretation: God is being asked to consider whom the victims of His wrath really are — mothers forced to become so cruel as to eat their own children! (*Kiflayim l'Sushiyah; Ibn Yachya*).

אִם-תֹּאכְלֶנָּה נָשִׁים פְּרִיָם — *Should women eat their own offspring?* An incredulous question: Has it ever happened to any other nation that their afflictions should result in the ghastly extreme of mothers eating

watches! Pour out your heart like water in the Presence of the Lord; lift up your hands to Him for the life of your young children, who swoon from hunger at every street corner.

²⁰ Look, HASHEM, and behold, whom You have treated so. Should women eat their own offspring, the babes of their care? Should priest and prophet be slain in the Sanctuary of the Lord?

their offspring, עֲלֵלֵי טַפָּחִים, *babes of their care* — whom they previously fondled and cared for like all compassionate mothers? Is such a thing right? (*Alshich; Palgei Mayim*).

Wouldn't it have been sufficient to let them die from starvation without having their mothers eat them? (*Ibn Yachya*).

[Apparently, not only mothers were reduced to such a state of cruelty]: 'Rav Yochanan said: Fathers, too, ate the flesh of their sons and daughters at the Destruction of both the First and Second Temples. Jeremiah lamented this horror by crying 'Therefore shall fathers eat the sons in your midst, and the sons shall eat their fathers' [Ezek. 5:10] (*Pesikta Rabbasi*).

עֲלֵלֵי טַפָּחִים — *Babes of their care* i.e. object of their fondling, caressing (*Ibn Ezra*).

The *Talmud* relates the incident of a child, *Doeg ben Yosef*, whose father died and he was left in his mother's care. Every day she would lovingly measure him בְּטַפָּחִים, with

her handbreadth, and give his [extra] weight in gold to the Temple. When the enemy prevailed, however, she slaughtered him and ate him. It was to her that Jeremiah referred when he lamented to God: *Shall women eat their own offspring, עֲלֵלֵי טַפָּחִים, 'the babes they measured by handbreadths'* [a play on *tipuchim*, 'of their care'; 'fondled'; read as *tefuchim*, 'measured by handbreadths,' as a sign of love as in this story] (*Yoma 38b; Midrash; Rashi*).

— אִם יִהְיֶה בְּמִקְדָּשׁ ה' כֹּהֵן וְנָבִיא — *Should priest and prophet be slain in the Sanctuary of the Lord?*

Rashi, citing the *Midrash* and *Talmud*, explains that this phrase is the retort of God to Israel: "And is it pleasing to you that you slew Zechariah ben Yehoyada, the Priest and Prophet, upon whom 'came the spirit of God'?" He rebuked the people for serving idols, and [as a result of a conspiracy] he was murdered in the Temple court, as related in *II Chronicles 24:20*.*

Within the context of the verse,

* *Nebuzaradan* was spurred on by the sight of the blood of the murdered prophet *Zechariah* seething on the floor of the Temple. At first, the Jews sought to conceal the true story connected with the blood, but at length they had to confess that it was the blood of a prophet who had prophesied the Destruction of the Temple, and had been slain by the people for his candor.

'I,' said he, 'will appease him.' He ordered the scholars of the kingdom to be executed on that bloody spot, then the school children, and at last the young priests — more than ninety-

פרק ב כא שָׁכְבוּ לְאָרֶץ חוּצוֹת נָעַר וְזָקֵן בְּתוֹלְתֵי
כא-כב וּבַחֲזוּרֵי נָפְלוּ בַּחֲרֵב הִרְגָתָ בַּיּוֹם אַפָּךְ
 טִבַּחְתָּ לֹא חֶמְלָתָ.
כב תִּקְרָא בַּיּוֹם מוֹעֵד מְגוּרֵי מִסְכִּיב וְלֹא
 הָיָה בַּיּוֹם אֶפְי־הוּהָ פָלִיט וְשָׁרִיד אֲשֶׁר-
 טַפַּחְתִּי וְרִבִּיתִי אֵיבִי כָלָם.

several commentators explain: 'Even if prophet and priest were murdered in the Temple court, is it fair that innocent women should be flung so low as to eat their offspring, who also never sinned? Therefore, 'Look HASHEM and behold, whom You have treated so, and have compassion on Your people Israel.' (Kiflayim l'Sushiyah; Lechem Dim'ah; Kol Yehudah).

21. שָׁכְבוּ לְאָרֶץ חוּצוֹת — Out on the ground, in the streets they lie, i.e. dead (Ibn Ezra); sprawled out, swooning from hunger (Lechem Dim'ah) as a result of 'the fury of HASHEM' [Jeremiah 6:11] (Midrash).

נָעַר וְזָקֵן — Young [man] and old. i.e. even those too young or old for combat who thereby escaped 'the sword', also suffered. They became the victims of starvation (Kiflayim l'Sushiyah).

בְּתוֹלְתֵי וּבַחֲזוּרֵי נָפְלוּ בַּחֲרֵב — My maidens and my young men have fallen by the sword. i.e. referring to those of military age: the young men as soldiers; and the maidens

who morally support and sustain them (Lechem Dim'ah).

— הִרְגָתָ בַּיּוֹם אַפָּךְ טִבַּחְתָּ לֹא חֶמְלָתָ — You slew them on the day of Your wrath; You slaughtered without mercy.

Had the Destruction come on a day other than 'the day of Your wrath', i.e. Tishah b'Av, it would have been tempered with mercy and restraint. Having come on the day You specifically set aside for display of Your anger, it was untempered and complete (Lechem Dim'ah).

22. תִּקְרָא בַּיּוֹם מוֹעֵד — You invited [lit. 'you will call'] as though at festival time. The translation follows Rashi: 'You call, as though at festival time, my evil neighbors round about to assemble and destroy me. . .'

Some commentators [Rav Almosnino, Lechem Dim'ah] interpret this verse as a prayer for the enemy's downfall: Proclaim also upon my evil neighbors round about a 'set time' as they proclaimed against me [see 1:15]. I am sure that

four thousand in all.

But the blood of the prophet went on seething until Nebuzaradan exclaimed: 'Zechariah, Zechariah! I have destroyed the flower of them. Do you wish me to massacre them all?'

Then the blood rested.

Thoughts of repentance came to Nebuzaradan's mind: If the Jews, who killed one person only, have been so severely punished, what will be my fate?

He left, and ultimately converted to Judaism (Sanhedrin 96b).

²¹ Out on the ground, in the streets they lie, young and old; my maidens and my young men have fallen by the sword. You slew them on the day of Your wrath; You slaughtered them and showed no mercy.

²² You invited, as though at festival time, my evil neighbors round about. So that, at the day of HASHEM's wrath, there were none who survived or escaped. Those whom I cherished and brought up, my enemy has wiped out.

their sins are so great that on the day of Your wrath against them there will remain among them none who survive or escape, in punishment for their having wiped out the children that I caressed and brought up.'

כיום מועד — As though at festival time. The enemy so swarmed over Jerusalem and the Temple that it was reminiscent of the throngs of Jewish pilgrims who used to swarm into Jerusalem on the festivals (*Ibn Shuib*).

מגורי מקיב — My evil neighbors round about. 'Evil' is not in the Hebrew. It is added following Rashi's translation.

Ibn Ezra suggests, 'my terrors', i.e. those who terrorize me.

כיום אפיה — The day of God's wrath, [As throughout this Book, every references to 'day of God's wrath' is to the Ninth of Av].

ולא היה ... פליט ושריד — There were none ... who survived or escaped. A poetic hyperbole, meaning — 'we were nearly extinguished entirely' (*Lechem Dim'ah*).

אשר טפחתי ורבייתי איבי כלם — Those whom I cherished [lit. 'caressed'] and brought up, my enemy has wiped out. Contrary to the usual war situation, where innocent children are left alive — here, they too were mercilessly wiped out (*Lechem Dim'ah*).

'Those whom I cherished' refers to the children; 'and brought up' refers to the adults (*Ibn Ezra*).

פֶּרֶק ג' א-ב אָנִי הַגֶּבֶר רָאָה עָנִי בְּשֶׁבֶט עֲבָרְתּוֹ. אוֹתִי
א-ה נָהֵג וַיִּלָּךְ חֶשֶׁךְ וְלֹא-אֹר. אֶךְ בִּי יֵשֶׁב
 יְהוָה יְדוּ כָל-הַיּוֹם.
ד-ה בָּלָה בְּשָׂרִי וְעוֹרִי שֶׁבֶר עֲצָמוֹתַי. בָּנָה

III

1. *אָנִי הַגֶּבֶר* — *I am the man*. Jeremiah in a personal statement laments that he saw more affliction than all the other prophets who foretold the Destruction of the Temple. For it was destroyed not in their days, but in his (*Rashi*). (It has been noted that the numerical value of *'אָנִי הַגֶּבֶר* [*=271*] equals *יְהוָהוּ* [Jeremiah [Tzfunos Yisrael]]).

Ibn Ezra mentions as an alternative, that any Jew who lived through those tragic days could be the speaker of these lines. ...

Or, as the *Midrash* suggests, the first-person narrative refers to the suffering of the entire nation as a collective entity personified as an individual.

[Chapter 3 is composed of a triple acrostic. It is written in the form of three-verse units, each verse beginning with the same letter.]

אָנִי הַגֶּבֶר רָאָה עָנִי — *I am the man who has seen affliction*. i.e. no one has seen more affliction than I (*Lechem Dim'ah*).*

[*'I have seen affliction'*, i.e. I have experienced misery and pain — culminating in the חורבן, *Destruction of the Temple*.]

The *Midrash* paraphrases: '*I am*

the man — I am indeed experienced in suffering; I know that whatever pleases You is ultimately beneficial to me.' I have learned לקבל afflictions with love in order to sanctify Your holy Name. But I recognize that whatever You do is for the good, I submit willingly to Your decree (*Torah Temimah*).

The *Midrash* notes that *רָאָה עָנִי*, '*who has seen affliction*', is third person [lit. '*he has seen affliction*'] and interprets the verse as a reference to God by the community of Israel. Thus: '*I am the man [of suffering]; God has seen my poverty in the performance of mitzvos and good deeds, and therefore punished me with the rod of His anger.*'

בְּשֶׁבֶט עֲבָרְתּוֹ — *By the rod of His anger*, i.e. the rod of the oppressor — referring to God (*Rashi*).

2. [In the verses 2-16 the sufferer proceeds to describe his suffering figuratively in a series of more or less isolated pictures. The translation which already incorporates much of the exegesis of the Sages, makes the verses, for the most part, readily understandable. The com-

* [The *Chidah*, in *Nachal Eshkol*, describes the utter anguish Jeremiah must have felt at witnessing the Destruction.

He quotes a *Midrash* which he had seen in Manuscript (portions of which are from *Pesikta Rabbasi* 26, and part of which has since been published in *Otzar haAgaddah* 247). Since the *Midrash* is so moving, I quote it at length, filling the gaps with the text of the *Pesikta*:]

God had told Jeremiah to go to Anasos [Jer. 32:8] because, while Jeremiah was in Jerusalem the enemy could not enter. As soon as he left, the city was ravaged [see also comm. to 1:13].

When Jeremiah returned to Jerusalem he saw the smoke of the Temple rising up. He

I am the man who has seen affliction by the rod of His anger. ²He has driven me on and on into unrelieved darkness. ³Only against me did He turn His hand repeatedly all day long.

⁴He has worn away my flesh and skin; He broke

mentary, in this chapter, has therefore been intended mainly to remove surface difficulties.]

אֹתִי נָהַג נִלָּךְ — He has driven me on and on [lit. 'He led me and steered me'] deliberately; my suffering is not accidental (*Ibn Yachya*).

חֹשֶׁךְ וְלֹא אֹרֶךְ — Unrelieved darkness [lit. 'darkness and not light'], i.e. a darkness that is unrelieved by any hope for light (*Ibn Ezra*).

['Darkness' in תִּנְיָ, Scriptures, conjures up an image of doom, imprisonment, as in Psalms 107:10: יֹשְׁבֵי חֹשֶׁךְ וְצִלְמוֹת אֶסִּירִי עֲנִי וּבְרִיז 'Those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, bound in affliction and iron'.]

Two expressions are used — darkness and the absence of light — to allude to the Destructions of both Temples. Also: 'and not light', i.e. without prophecy; without Torah, which is called 'light' (*Midrash Lekach Tov*).

3. אֶךְ בִּי — Only against me — i.e. I alone am the constant recipient of His punishment (*Rashi*).

Sifsei Chachamim personifies the phrase as referring specifically to Jeremiah: 'On no prophet but me'

[see *comm.* 3:1]

'All nations sin but toward no other nation is God so zealous in exacting retribution as toward Israel' (*Rav Yosef Kara*).

יָשָׁב יָהֲפֹךְ יָדוֹ — Turn His hand repeatedly. In punishment, anthropomorphically, as if — so to speak — He wants the punishment to be constant; when one hand 'tires' He uses the other (*Toras Chesed*).

Alshich translates: 'He removed His compassionate hand [i.e. His protection] from me.'

4. [The verse speaks of man's total physical suffering:]

בָּלָה בְּשָׁרִי וְעוֹרִי — He has worn away my flesh and skin 'The flesh and skin which are sensitive to pain — He wore away. The bones, which have no tactile sensation — He crushed' (*Ibn Ezra*).

The *Midrash* explains that 'flesh' refers to the Community; 'skin' to the Sanhedrin. As the skin covers [i.e. protects] the flesh, so does the Sanhedrin protect Israel.

Similarly, the bones — עֲצָמוֹתֵי — is interpreted by the *Midrash* as צַדִּיקִים, 'my mighty men' — the Sages and Righteous, who are the 'bones.'

thought that the Jews had repented and the rising smoke was the sacrificial incense. But when he came closer, he saw the Temple overturned into rubble, and the wall of Jerusalem destroyed. He rent his garments and wept . . .

Jeremiah had rushed back to Jerusalem, because he recalled that, long ago as youths, he and Nebuchadnezzar were strolling. Nebuchadnezzar was poor and despised at the time, and he said: "I wish that I were ruler of the world. I would attack Jerusalem, burn the Temple and city, murder the inhabitants, and take the survivors into captivity."

Seeing prophetically that it would be as Nebuchadnezzar wished, Jeremiah asked: "Grant

פרק ג וְעָלִי וַיִּקַּף רֹאשׁ וּתְלָאָה. בְּמַחֲשָׁבִים
 רִט הוֹשִׁיבֵנִי בְּמַתִּי עוֹלָם.
 זח גָּדַר בְּעָרִי וְלֹא אֵצֶא הַכְּבִיר נְחֹשְׁתִּי. גַּם
 ט כִּי אֶזְעַק נֶאֱשׁוּעַ שְׁתָּם תִּפְלְתִּי. גָּדַר
 דְּרָכַי בְּגִזִּית נְתִיבֹתַי עוֹהָ.

the pillars of the community (*Torah T'mimah*).

בְּנָה עָלִי — *He besieged me* [lit. 'he built upon me'] Not impetuously, but deliberately and methodically, as one plans a structure (*Palgei Mayim*).

וַיִּקַּף רֹאשׁ וּתְלָאָה — *And He encircled me with bitterness and travail* [leaving no avenue of escape].

According to the *Midrash*, ראש, *bitterness*, refers to Nebuchadnezzar's exile of Yehoyachin; ותלֵאָה, *travail*, refers to Nebuzaradan who gave the final blow in the days of Zedekiah, וְהִלְאֵנִי, and sapped my strength (*Rashi*).

The *Midrash* continues that, prophetically, the verse alludes to Vespasian and Trajan [in the time of the Destruction of the Second Temple.]

Some commentators (e.g. *Ibn Ezra*; *Midrash Lekach Tov*) translate ראש, as its more common meaning: 'Head,' i.e. 'He built a structure around my head,' in effect imprisoning Jeremiah.'

6. — *He has* בְּמַחֲשָׁבִים הוֹשִׁיבֵנִי.

placed [lit. 'made me dwell'] in darkness — i.e. in utter darkness ['darkness within darkness'] (*Ibn Ezra*).

This refers to the darkness of the long exile (*Midrash Lekach Tov*).

בְּמַתִּי עוֹלָם — *Like the eternally dead*. The *Midrash* infers from this verse that a blind man ['one who lives in perpetual darkness'] is regarded as dead.

7. — *He has walled* ' [lit. 'hedged'] me in. גָּדַר בְּעָרִי.

The prophet alludes to our long exile. God has in effect walled us in — so that the dark exile imprisons us. The verses continue that he weighed us down with oppression and closed the door to our prayers (*Lechem Dim'ah*).

הַכְּבִיר נְחֹשְׁתִּי — *He weighed me down with chains*. [lit. 'with copper chains'] i.e. He chained me with copper fetters around my feet so I could not move (*Rashi*).

Although 'He walled me in so I could not escape' He still 'weighed me down with chains' — not to pre-

[i.e. 'spare'] me Jerusalem. "No", answered Nebuchadnezzar.

"Then grant me the Temple." — "No!"

"The Sanhedrin; the school children!" — "No!"

"Then what will you spare me?" asked Jeremiah.

"Whatever you can save by removing it from the City on the afternoon until the evening of that day, is yours to save."

But, God had called Jeremiah away to Anasos so that the Destruction could take place. Though he rushed back, he did not arrive until evening. It was too late — he could save nothing!

my bones. ⁵ He besieged and encircled me with bitterness and travail. ⁶ He has placed me in darkness like the eternally dead.

⁷ He has walled me in so I cannot escape; He has weighed me down with chains. ⁸ Though I would cry out and plead, He shut out my prayer. ⁹ He has walled up my roads with hewn stones; He tangled up my paths.

vent my escape, but to afflict me (*Alshich; Kol Yehuda*).

8. **גַּם כִּי אֶצְעַק וְאֶשָּׁאָה** — *Though I would cry out and plead.* 'Rav Eliezer said: From the day the Temple was destroyed, the gates of prayer have been shut, as it is written 'Though I cry out and plead, He shuts out my prayer' (*Berachos 32b*).

This refers to insincere private prayer; public prayer, or sincere private prayer is always accepted (*Torah T'mimah*).

שָׁתַם תְּפִלָּתִי — *He shuts out my prayer* by closing the 'windows' of Heaven (*Rashi*); and by placing an 'iron barrier' between Him and Israel (*Midrash Lekach Tov*).

The *Midrash*, notes that prayers said with a congregation are more acceptable than those said alone or after the congregation has finished. [This is suggested by the fact that the verse, concluding with the phrase 'He shut out my prayer' is in the singular, this indicating that, had a quorum prayed, their supplication would have been heard (*Torah T'mimah*)]. 'If ten righteous men pray and a wicked person joins them, would HASHEM say "I refuse to hear their prayer because of this single wicked person"? But if a person comes after the congregation

is finished, and stands alone in prayer, his every deed and thought is scrutinized.'

9. **וְגֵר רַחֲבֵי בְּנֵי־אֶרֶץ** — *He has walled up [lit. 'hedged about'] my roads with hewn stones.* Even if I were not 'hedged about and chained' [verse 7]; and even had my prayers been answered allowing me to escape, still I would not be able to flee because the roads were made impassable (*Lechem Dim'ah*).

[The word **בְּנֵי־אֶרֶץ**, *hewn stones* suggests an impenetrable structure.]

The *Midrash* illustrates how comparatively easy the journey to Jerusalem used to be because of the excellent roads. To cite one example: 'The women of Lydda used to knead their dough, go up to Jerusalem to pray and return before it leavened.'

וְתִיבְתִּי עֵנָה — *He had tangled up my paths.* Even if I could, I would not travel the paved straight roads, because enemies would be nesting there. Rather, I took the crooked [i.e. untraveled] roads (*Rashi*).

Ibn Ezra explains that the word **וְתִיבְתִּי**, *paths*, refers to familiar roads. These familiar paths were now tangled into such a labyrinth, that a traveler would find himself going about in circles, his attempt to escape frustrated (*Lechem Dim'ah*).

פרק ג ייא דב ארב הוא לי אריה במסתרים. דרכי
יטו יב סורר ונפשחני שמי שומם. דרך קשתו
ארי ק ונציבני במטרא לחץ.
יגיד הביא בכליתי בני אשפתו. הייתי שחק
טו לכל-עמי נגינתם כל-היום. השביעני

10. *He is a lurking bear to me.* [The verse does not make it clear who is referred to: God; or His 'delegate' — the enemy.]

According to *Rashi*, the subject is the Holy One, blessed be He, Who has become like a lurking bear.

The *Midrash* however, interprets 'bear' as referring to Nebuchadnezzar, or, prophetically to Vespasian. 'Lion' — refers to Nebuzaradan [the general who made the final attack during the First Destruction], or to Trajan [the conquering general during the Second Destruction].

According to many commentators (*Alshich; Ibn Yachya; Kol Yehuda*) the verse refers to the enemy who lay in hiding ready to pounce upon Israel without warning.

ארי במסתרים — *A lion in hiding.* A bear attacks, not from viciousness, but to satisfy his hunger; while a lion may attack merely to demonstrate his superior strength. Also a bear usually moves in the open and his attacks can be anticipated, while a lion is stealthy and attacks by surprise. The enemy is thus likened to both a bear and a lion because he has the bad traits of them both (*Kif-layim l'Sushiyah*).

11. *He has strewn my paths with thorns and made me tread carefully* [or: 'and split me in pieces'].

This translation follows most classical commentators — *Rashi, Alshich, Lechem Dim'ah, Ibn Yachya, Galanti* who derive the word סורר from סירים, 'thorns' [as in הנני שך את-דרךך בסירים 'I will hedge your way with thorns' (*Hoshea 2:8*)]

Ibn Ezra, however, differs with *Rashi*. He derives the word from כי כפרה סררה [*Hoshea 4:16*] which he translates "as a heifer which strays from the road". Therefore, according to him, the translation would be: Because God acted like a bear and a lion (see verse 10) 'He forced me off my paths . . .'

The *Targum* translates: 'He confounded my ways and split me.'

Midrash Lekach Tov translates: 'God saw me straying from the proper path and He split me' [i.e. punished me].

נפשחני — *Rashi* explains — He made me walk with feet spread apart to keep my balance over the thorny roads.

12. *He bent his bow and set me up.* *Lechem Dim'ah* notes that the order is reversed. Usually one first sets up his target and then takes aim. The verse implies that the enemy kept him in constant terror by keeping his bow bent and aimed at him

[Being 'walled in without escape' and 'weighed down with chains' as described in verses 7-9, he was cer-

III

10-15 ¹⁰ He is a lurking bear to me, a lion in hiding. ¹¹ He has strewn my paths with thorns and made me tread carefully; He made me desolate. ¹² He bent His bow and set me up as a target for the arrow.

¹³ He shot into my vitals the arrows of His quiver. ¹⁴ I have become a laughing stock to all my people; object of their jibes all day long. ¹⁵ He filled me with

tainly an easy target!]

The *Midrash*, alternatively, translates וַיַּעֲבֵדֵי and set me up, as 'He made me stand firm; He strengthened me to withstand ['all afflictions'].

בְּמִשְׁכָּא לַחַץ — As a target for the arrow. Just as a target survives the arrows shot at it, so do the Jews (*Rav Yonasan Eibescheutz*).

13. הָבִיא בְּכִלְיִי — He shot into my vitals [lit. 'He brought into my kidneys'] i.e. the enemy didn't aim at my heart to cause a speedy death. Instead he aimed for my liver to prolong my agony (*Akeidas Yitzchak; Alshich; Ibn Yachya*).

[Those commentators who understand the 'enemy' as referring to God (see *comm.* to 3:1) probably understand this verse figuratively. בְּכִלְיִי, 'liver' is used in Scriptures to depict the seat of creative understanding (compare מְעֵי, innards, in 1:20) — i.e. the sorrows sent by God rankle within us. Today, we would use 'heart' to describe this feeling.]

14. הֵיִיתִי שָׂחֵק לְכָל-עַמִּי — I have become a laughing stock to all my people [i.e. an object of derision].

עַמִּי — my people is explained as: 'The people in whose midst I dwell (*Lechem Dim'ah*).

The *Targum* translates: פְּרִיזִי, 'the impudent (scorners) of my nation'.

The *Midrash* explains this as referring to 'the nations of the world who sit in theaters and circuses. After they eat and drink and become intoxicated, they sit and discuss me, scoffing at me.

According to *Palgei Mayim*, Jeremiah is lamenting how, whenever he prophesied oracles of reproof and impending disaster, the Jews would laugh and taunt him. Because of their inattentiveness to his prophecies, disaster fell.*

נְגִינָתָם כָּל-הַיּוֹם — Their jibes [lit. 'songs'] all day long [i.e. I became the theme of their satirical songs.]

15. הִשְׁבִּיעַנִי בַמְרוֹרִים הָרְנוּנִי לַעֲנָה — He filled me with bitterness, sated me with wormwood. Instead of bread and water — bitterness and wormwood (*Ibn Ezra*).

['Wormwood' is a tree which yields bitter herbs, and hence, it should be understood in this con-

* In this connection, the *Pesikta Rabbasi* retells a moving *Midrash*: When Jeremiah returned to Jerusalem immediately after the Destruction, he rent his garments and cried out saying: 'What road have those who were driven off to exile, taken? What road have those who are about to perish, taken? I will go perish along with them!' As he went, he saw the road covered with blood. He put his face close to the ground and saw

פרק ג במרורים הרנני לענה.

טזכא טו ויגרס בקצץ שני הכפישני באפר.

ידיה ותנח משלום נפשי נשיתי טובה. ואמר

אבר נצחי ותוחלתי מיהנה.

יטכ זכרעני ומרודי לענה נראש. זכור

יחשוט ק' כא תזכור ותשיח עלי נפשי. זאת אשיב

text as a poetic synonym of 'bitterness'.]

The *Midrash*, linking במרורים, bitterness, with קרור, the bitter herbs, eaten at the Passover Seder, notes that 'the night of the week on which the first day of Passover occurs, is always the same as that on which the night of Tishah b'Av falls.'

16. ויגרס בקצץ שני — *He ground my teeth on gravel.* *Rashi* explains that because the exiles had to knead their dough in pits dug into the ground, their bread was mixed with grit. God had told Ezekiel [Ezekiel 12:3] to prepare easily portable cooking utensils for use in the trip into exile. The purpose of the command was so that the people would follow his example and be ready to cope with the rigors of the journey. But the people jeered at him and did not obey. Ultimately, their teeth were broken.

הכפישני באפר — *He made me cower in ashes.* i.e. He covered me with ashes (*Rashi*).

The *Talmud* relates that on the eve of Tishah b'Av, after Rav would complete his regular meal, he

would dip a morsel of bread into ashes and say 'This is the essence of the Erev Tishah b'Av meal, in fulfillment of the verse: ... He made me cower in ashes' (*Yerushalmi Taanis 4:6*).

17. ותנח משלום נפשי — *My soul despaired of having peace.* [lit. 'my soul was rejected' (נזח) as in 2:7] from peace.]

After having been subjected to such affliction, I despaired of ever again being at peace. Goodness [i.e. prosperity] seemed forever to be in the remote past (*Lechem Dim'ah*).

According to the *Talmud* (*Shabbos 25b*) this refers to 'kindling the Sabbath lights' [i.e. they could not even afford this and] without light there is no peace, for one who goes about in a dark house stumbles (*Rashi a.l.*).

Several commentators [*Lechem Dim'ah*; *Midrash Lekach Tov*; *Palgei Mayim*] understand שלום 'Peace', as a title for God and His Torah. They translate the verse as a causitive statement: 'Because I rejected God and the Torah, therefore prosperity eluded me.' Or, alternatively, 'Peace' refers to God and

the footprints of children who were walking into captivity. He threw himself to the ground kissing the footprints.

When he caught up to the exiles he embraced and kissed them and they all wept. He spoke to them saying: 'My brothers, all that has befallen you is the consequence of your not heeding the words of prophecy that HASHEM uttered through me. ...'

III bitterness; sated me with wormwood.

16-21 ¹⁶ He ground my teeth on gravel, He made me cower in ashes. ¹⁷ My soul despaired of having peace, I have forgotten goodness. ¹⁸ And I said, 'Gone is my strength and my expectation from HASHEM.'

¹⁹ Remember my afflictions and my sorrow; the wormwood and bitterness. ²⁰ My soul remembers well — and makes me despondent. ²¹ Yet, this I bear

'Goodness' to the Torah both being causative: 'Because I rejected God and forgot his Torah, therefore [next verse:] Gone is my strength ...'

נְשִׁיתִי טוֹבָה — I forgot goodness. According to the Talmud, 'Goodness' refers to [the comfort of] bathing in hot water; a beautiful bed [couch] with beautiful linen on it ... and a well dressed wife (*Shabbos* 25b).

Rabbi once remarked: Our fathers said 'we have forgotten goodness' [they once knew goodness but lost it]; we have never even seen it! (*Nedarim* 50b).

18. נֶאֱמַר אָבֵר נִצְחִי — And I said, 'Gone is my strength.' [This translation follows Targum.] Rashi translates: I thought to myself, amidst my tribulations, 'Gone is my world, [i.e. my existence] and my hope.'

וְתוֹחֲלִיתִי מָה — And my expectation from HASHEM [i.e. I was in utter despair; I thought my plight was hopeless.].

Midrash *Lekach Tov* sees the ו of תוֹחֲלִיתִי not as 'and', but as 'nevertheless.' i.e. 'Although I gave

up all rational hope, nevertheless my expectation of salvation is from HASHEM.'

19. זְכַר-עֲנִי וּמְרוּרֵי לַעֲנָה וְרָאָה — Remember my afflictions and my sorrow, wormwood and bitterness. [For 'sorrow' see also comm. to 1:7]

The Midrash understands מְרוּרֵי as 'rebellious' [from מָרַר] and translates; 'The Community of Israel speaks before the Holy One, blessed be He: Lord of the Universe, remember the tribulations I inflicted and my rebelliousness against you; but remember also the suffering I endured in that You sated me with wormwood and bitterness. Let the latter be an expiation for the former.'

According to another interpretation, the prophet is lamenting his own condition: 'To recall my affliction and sorrow brings me bitterness' (*Lechem Dim'ah*).

20. נִפְשִׁי זָכוֹר תִּזְכֹּר — My soul remembers well. This translation is in accordance with Rashi who understands 'my soul' as being the subject of this verse: My soul remembers well my affliction and sorrow; I am despondent.

He turned to leave them to comfort the captives still in Jerusalem, and they wept, asking him 'Father Jeremiah, will you really abandon us?'

'Heaven and earth are witnesses,' Jeremiah answered. 'Had you wept even once while you still dwelt in Zion, you would not have been driven out.'

פרק ג אֶל-לְבִי עַל-כֵּן אוֹחִיל.

כב כִּסְרֵי יְהוָה כִּי לֹא-תִמְנֶנּוּ כִּי לֹא-כָלוּ
 כג רַחֲמָיו. חֲדָשִׁים לְבָקָרִים רַבָּה אֲמוֹנָתָה.
 כד חֲלָקֵי יְהוָה אֲמָרָה נִפְשִׁי עַל-כֵּן אוֹחִיל
 לו.

כה־כו טוב יהוה לקוֹ לנפש תדרשנו. טוב

According to another interpretation, this verse is a plea to God: 'Please God, remember [i.e. take cognizance] that my soul is despondent within me' (*Lechem Dim'ah*).

The *Midrash* translates: זָכוֹר — You will surely remember, [O God], the nations of the world and will punish them for oppressing me, but while waiting for the vengeance, תְּשׁוּחָה עָלַי נִפְשִׁי, my soul is despondent [i.e. I haven't the patience to wait any longer.] A proverb declares: 'While the fat one grows lean, the lean one expires.'

21. — [Yet,] *this I bear in mind* [lit. 'answer to my heart.']

After my heart told me that it 'lost its expectation from HASHEM' [verse 2:38], I bore this in mind and thus restored my faith (*Rashi*).

[Verses 19-21 represent the transition from the despair (which culminates in verse 18) and the doctrine of hope which is achieved by recalling God's mercy in verses 22-38.]

'In the time to come when the era of redemption arrives, God will say to Israel, 'My sons, I wonder how you waited for Me all these years.' And they will answer, 'Lord of the Universe, had it not been for Your Torah which You gave us, the heathen peoples would long ago have caused us to perish.'

Therefore, it is stated אֶל אָשִׁיב אֶל לְבִי, *this I bear in mind*, and זאת *this*, indicates nothing else than the Torah, as it is said וְזֹאת הַתּוֹרָה, 'And this is the Torah' [Deut. 4:44] (*Midrash*).

עַל-כֵּן אוֹחִיל — Therefore I still hope, in Him, and proclaim the Unity of His name twice daily by saying: 'Hear O Israel, HASHEM our God is HASHEM the Only One' [translation of Rav S.R. Hirsch] (*Midrash*).

22. [This verse begins the expression of faith and hope alluded to in the previous verse and continues through verse 38.]

חִסְדֵּי ה' כִּי לֹא-תִמְנוּ — HASHEM's kindness surely has not ended. [i.e. are inexhaustible.] *Rashi*, whose translation we followed, gives an alternate translation: חִסְדֵּי ה', it is due to HASHEM's kindness' כִּי לֹא תִמְנוּ, that we were not annihilated for our transgressions, רַחֲמָיו — because His mercies are not exhausted [see Numbers 17:28].

Midrash Lekach Tov comments: The kindnesses — which HASHEM performs for the Jews in every generation — are inexhaustible i.e. whatever God does for the Jews is not due to their merit, but to His beneficence.

23. חֲדָשִׁים לְבָקָרִים — They are new every morning [lit. 'they are new to

III in mind; therefore I still hope:

22-26 ²² HASHEM's kindness surely has not ended, nor are His mercies exhausted. ²³ They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness! ²⁴ 'HASHEM is my portion,' says my soul, therefore I have hope in Him.

²⁵ HASHEM is good to those who trust in Him; to the soul that seeks Him. ²⁶ It is good to hope submis-

the mornings] i.e. 'Your kindnesses are renewed from day to day' (Rashi.) The *Alshich* interprets the subject of this verse as the soul of man: God renews man's life every morning, and I have faith that He will continue to do so in the future — and redeem us.

The *Talmud* interprets esoterically that each day God creates a band of new angels who utter a song before Him and then pass away (*Chagigah* 14a).

רַבָּה אֱמוּנָתְךָ — Great is your faithfulness. i.e. Great is Your promise; and it is great to believe in Your fulfilling and guarding whatever You promised (Rashi).

One earns great merit by believing in You (*Lechem Dim'ah*).

24. חֶלְקִי ה' אֲמַרָה נַפְשִׁי — 'HASHEM is my portion' says my soul, to me (*Ibn Ezra*) [i.e. my soul, seeking to strengthen me, says this to me] (*Ibn Ezra*). And it is incumbent upon me to have faith in Him (Rashi), and not to worship idols, but to serve only the Holy One, blessed be He, and proclaim His unity [by reading the שְׁמַע, *Sh'ma*] twice daily (*Midrash*).

[This verse ending with וְלִי בִן אֲוִיִּל לִי, 'Therefore I have hope in Him' is an amplification of verse 21: 'Yet this I bear in mind; therefore I still hope.']

Rav S.R. Hirsch's profound commentary to *Psalms* 16:5 lends a clearer understanding of the phrase 'HASHEM is my portion': חֶלְקִי is 'my inheritance' of material goods ... It is not said here 'HASHEM ordains my portion' but 'HASHEM is my portion', i.e. whatever possessions shall be mine on earth, that which lends them their true significance for me is not their value *per se*, but HASHEM Himself who is the guide of my destiny ... The mere consciousness that this inheritance has come to me from Him makes it precious to me.

25. טוֹב ה' לָקֹנֵה — HASHEM is good to those who trust in Him [i.e. who have confidence in Him.]

The *Midrash* cites an apparent contradiction between this verse and the verse in *Psalms* 145:9 stating that HASHEM is good to all, not only to those who trust in Him. The *Midrash* explains with a parable: When one waters his orchard, he waters all of it. When one hoes, however, he hoes only the better plants. [So, too, in normal times, God provides for everyone equally, but in a time of punishment and destruction, only those who hope in Him are worthy of individual intervention (*Torah T'mimah*)].

לִנְפֶשׁ תִּדְרָשׁוּנִי — To the soul that seeks Him. The verse must be un-

פרק ג כו וַיְחִיל וְדוֹמָם לַתְּשׁוּעָתָ יְהוָה. טוֹב לִגְבוֹר
כּוֹלֵל כִּי־יִשָּׂא עַל בְּנֵעוּרָיו.

כח-כט יֹשֵׁב בְּדָרְךָ וַיִּדָּם כִּי נָטַל עָלָיו. יִתֵּן בְּעַפְרֹ
ל פִּיהוּ אוֹלֵי יֵשׁ תִּקְוָה. יִתֵּן לְמַכְּהוּ לַחֵי
יִשְׁבַּע בַּחֲרָפָה.

לא-לב כִּי לֹא יִזְנַח לְעוֹלָם אֲדָנִי. כִּי אִם־הוֹגָה
יִסְדְּרִי ק' לג וְרַחֵם כְּרַב חֲסָדָיו. כִּי לֹא עָנָה מַלְבוֹ וַיִּגָּה.

derstood in the overall context: 'I have hope in HASHEM because His kindness is inexhaustible; He is my portion and I have faith in Him. Yet, when I perceive Him to be unmerciful it is because His goodness is directed primarily toward those who actively seek Him out by fulfilling His commandments (Kiflayim l'Sushiyah).

Nachal Eshkol explains that 'HASHEM is good to all who trust in Him' — collectively; and grants goodness 'to each and every person' ['soul'] — individually, according to his level of acceptance and commitment.

26-27 'Since we are certain that God will not eternally neglect us, the prudent thing to do is to accept God's afflictions submissively, in quiet resignation, and silently anticipate God's ultimate salvation. As for the suffering he inflicts upon us in the interim . . . It is better to bear the yoke in one's youth — while one is young and has the vigor to withstand the tribulations, rather than when old and lacking the stamina (Alshich).

וְדוֹמָם — Submissively [lit. 'silently.'].

Ibn Ezra notes that this verse may indicate that the prophet was a young man at the time, or that he

wanted to be enheartening and encouraging to the younger generation.

The Midrash comments: It is good for man to bear the yoke of his youth — i.e. the yoke of the Torah, of matrimony and of an occupation — [obligations which should be assumed at any early age, and not be deferred.]

28. יֹשֵׁב בְּדָרְךָ וַיִּדָּם — Let one sit in solitude and be submissive [lit. 'silent'] i.e. one who has been beset by misfortune should sit as one forsaken and anticipate the forthcoming goodness.

Or: 'He who experiences suffering and has been left alone [i.e. bereft of his family] should nevertheless suffer in silence.' For this he will be rewarded (Rav Almosnino).

—כִּי נָטַל עָלָיו—For He has laid it upon him. For it is the 'Master of Decrees' [i.e. God] who has inflicted this decree upon him (Rashi), and he should submit to his fate willingly (Alshich).

Since God has brought about the suffering, and His mercy is all-encompassing, we can be certain that the affliction was decreed for a set period of time. Let us wait for His salvation (Midrash Lekach Tov).

III sively for HASHEM's salvation. ²⁷ It is good for a
 27-33 man that he bear a yoke in his youth.

²⁸ Let one sit in solitude and be submissive, for He has laid it upon him. ²⁹ Let him put his mouth to the dust — there may yet be hope. ³⁰ Let one offer his cheek to his smiter, let him be filled with disgrace.

³¹ —For the Lord does not reject forever; ³² He first afflicts, then pities according to His abundant kindness. ³³ For He does not torment capriciously,

Lechem Dim'ah suggests that the verse could mean: 'let him who suffers sit in solitude and reflect upon his fate. He will then realize that his suffering was caused by his many sins. . .'

29. יתן בַּעֲפֹר פִּיהוּ — Let him put his mouth to the dust. i.e. Let him submit with absolute resignation to his Maker — as one who prostrates himself completely in the dust (*Ibn Yachya*; *Ibn Ezra*), i.e. let them pray incessantly for redemption (*Midrash Lekach Tov*).

אוֹלֵי יֵשׁ תִּקְנֶה — There may yet be hope — that God will forgive him (*Alshich*).

When Rabbi [the compiler of the *Mishnah*] reached these verses [29-31] he wept (*Midrash*), because even after all the indignities which were heaped upon Israel, the prophet still said *אוֹלֵי יֵשׁ*, 'perhaps,' as if 'hope' was still doubtful (*Torah T'mimah*).

30. יתן לַמִּכָּהוּ לְחִי — Let him offer his cheek [lit. 'a cheek'] to the one who strikes him. i.e. further submit willingly. (*Ibn Ezra*) and not complain to HASHEM (*Ibn Yachya*).

[This is reminiscent of *Isaiah* 50:6 'I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked

off the hair.']

31. [In the last several verses, the prophet exhorted man to completely debase himself in resignation before God. Now, he justifies his advice by extolling the compassion of God].

כִּי לֹא יוֹנֵחַ לְעוֹלָם ה' — For the Lord does not reject forever. [i.e. His anger is of limited duration] and it is therefore good to be submissive [silent] (*Rashi*).

God waits for man to repent (*Alshich*).

32. כִּי אִם־הוֹנֶה וְרַחֵם כְּרַב הַסִּדּוֹ — He first afflicts, then pities according to His abundant kindness. [The translation of this difficult verse follows *Targum*].

Rashi translates 'He brings grief upon man because of his iniquities, and then pities according to His abundant kindness.'

Alshich ties verses 32-33 together: 'If we see that HASHEM saddens man because of his sins, be assured that He will soon display compassion, because God does not torment capriciously.'

33. כִּי לֹא עֲנֶה מְלָכוֹ — For He does not torment capriciously. i.e. He has no desire to punish capriciously;

סָרָקָה	בְּנֵי-אִישׁ.
לִדְמָה	לְרַבָּא תַּחַת רַגְלֵיו כָּל אֲסִירֵי אֶרֶץ.
ע' וְעִירָא לֹהֲלוּ	לְהַטּוֹת מִשְׁפָּט-גָּבֵר נֶגֶד פְּנֵי עֲלִיּוֹן. לַעֲוֹת אָדָם בְּרִיבוֹ אֲדֹנֵי לֹא רָאָה.
לֹד־לֹח	מִי זֶה אָמַר וַתְּהִי אֲדֹנֵי לֹא צָוָה. מִפִּי עֲלִיּוֹן לֹא תֵצֵא הַרְעוֹת וְהַטּוֹב. מִה-
חֲטָאֵי ק'	יִתְאוּנוֹן אָדָם חַי גָּבֵר עַל-חֲטָאוֹ.
מ	נַחֲפָשָׁה דְרַכֵּינוּ וְנַחֲקָרָה וְנִשְׁוֹבָה עַד-

everything is in retribution for one's sins (*Rashi; Alshich*).

34. לְרַבָּא תַּחַת רַגְלֵיו — *Nor crush under His feet*. This verse follows as a continuation of the preceding verse. i.e. 'God does not torment capriciously . . . nor does He capriciously crush under His feet, etc.' (*Rashi*).

כָּל אֲסִירֵי אֶרֶץ — *All the prisoners of the earth*. This phrase is a poetic description referring to all mankind. Are we not all 'prisoners' on God's earth with no way to escape His providence? (*Alshich*).

Lechem Dim'ah interprets: All sinners who are 'prisoners of their own earthly passions.'

35. לְהַטּוֹת מִשְׁפָּט-גָּבֵר — *Nor deny a man justice*. According to *Rashi*, this verse, too, continues the theme begun in verse 33, enumerating what HASHEM does not capriciously do or allow.

נֶגֶד פְּנֵי עֲלִיּוֹן — *In the presence of the Most High*. i.e. it is written of the deliberations of an earthly rabbinical court that it judges, as it were, in the presence of God, who protects them against depriving a man of justice. If God does not al-

low human judges to distort justice, He himself cannot be accused of it! (*Alshich*).

36. לַעֲוֹת אָדָם בְּרִיבוֹ ה' לֹא רָאָה — *To wrong a man in his conflict — the Lord does not approve*. i.e. God would not consent that the Heavenly Tribunal should wrong a man in his conflict (*Rashi*).

God wants man's efforts to be justly recompensed and rewarded. Hence, God prefers that the Jews live on their land permanently. The exile is not because the Jews were 'wronged,' but because they sinned (*Lekach Tov*).

Lechem Dim'ah interprets this as the cause for the preceding verse: 'He does not deny a man justice in the presence of the Most High because the Lord does not approve that a man be wronged in his conflict.'

37-40. *Rashi* groups together three verses and explains: One should never ascribe his suffering to chance, because from whom else but from God does good and evil emanate? Therefore why should a man complain? — Let everyone put the blame on his own sins! — and [verse 40] search his ways and repent.

³⁴ Nor crush under His feet all the prisoners of the earth; ³⁵ nor deny a man justice in the presence of the Most High. ³⁶ To wrong a man in his conflict — the Lord does not approve.

³⁷ Whose decree was ever fulfilled unless the Lord ordained it? ³⁸ Is it not from the mouth of the Most High that evil and good emanate? ³⁹ Of what shall a living man complain? A strong man for his sins!

⁴⁰ Let us search and examine our ways and return

הַרְעוּת וְהַטוֹב — *Good and evil. Palgei Mayim*, in contrast to *Rashi*, takes this phrase as a statement and explains that although everything does emanate from God, the choice of man's actions—good or bad—is not divine, but human ...

Thus the *Rambam* [in his *Hilchos Teshuvah*, and 'Eight Chapters'] writes that man is mistaken in ascribing to God his evil ways — as if they were divinely forced upon him. When justice is meted out to him, why should someone complain that he was coerced? — גִּבּוֹר עַל-חַטָּאָו, he is a 'strong man' over his sins! Let him conquer his evil ways! Where there is knowledge of God there is free choice.

מִהַיְתָאוֹנֵן אָדָם חַי גִּבּוֹר עַל-חַטָּאָו — *Of what shall a living man complain? A strong man for his sins!* Let him be thankful that he is alive! Rav Levi said: The Holy One, blessed be He, declared: Your existence is in My hand, and, being alive, you complain! Rav Huna said: Let him stand up like a brave man, acknowledge his sins, and not complain. Rav Berachiah explained the verse: Why does man complain against Him who lives eternally? If

a man wishes to complain, let it be about his own sins! (*Midrash*).

This חֲטָאָו written form, is חֲטָאוֹ, 'his sin' [singular]. The *Shaar Bas Rabim* points out that someone should be particularly concerned about his first sin. He dare not overlook it, or take it lightly, because "עֲבִירָה גּוֹרֶרֶת עֲבִירָה", — 'one sin leads to another' — and his entire future might very well depend upon how he reacted to that first sin.

Similarly, Rav Yonasan Eyebeschütz points out that one should not overlook even a single transgression — however minor it appears — rather, 'man should "complain" about every single sin.'

40. — נַחֲפָשָׁה דְרַבְיֵנוּ וְנַחֲקְרָה. [lit.]: *Let us search and examine our ways.* This is the climax of the previous verses. Since man has only his own sins to blame for any misfortunes emanating from God, he should not grumble and recriminate. Instead, 'let us search our conduct to find the cause of our suffering — and then repent' (*Kiflayim l'Sushiyah*).

As the *Talmud* advises: 'If a man

פֶּרֶק ג' מא יְהוָה. נִשָּׂא לִבְּנוּ אֶל-כַּפֵּימָּם אֶל-אֵל
מֵא-מָה מִב בְּשִׁמְמִים. נִחֲנוּ פִשְׁעֵנוּ וּמְרִינוּ אֶתָּה לֹא
סִלַּחְתָּ.

מג סְכוּתָה בָּאָף וְתִרְדְּפֵנוּ הִרְגָתָ לֹא חֲמִלָתָ.
מֵר-מָה סְכָתָה בְּעֵזְנוּ לָךְ מִעֲבוּר תִּפְלָה. סַחֲי

sees that pain and suffering visit him, let him examine his conduct, as it says: 'Let us examine our ways and return to HASHEM' (*Berachos 5a*).

This verse is reminiscent of *Zephaniah 1:12*: 'I will search Jerusalem with candles.' One should search his ways so that his repentance will reach 'up to HASHEM' — to His Throne of Glory' (*Midrash Lekach Tov*).

... Rav Galanti elaborates that this 'soul searching' must be accomplished in a manner similar to the meticulous searching 'with the light of a candle' — in every nook and crevice — as required when searching for *Chametz* before Passover. The simile here refers to the soul which is likened to light [בֵּין נֶשְׁמַת אָדָם — 'the light of God is the soul of man.'] When one is guided by his soul and conducts the 'search' properly throughout 'every nook and cranny' of his being — even in areas where he least suspects it — he will inevitably discover some 'Chametz,' the symbol of sin and improper behavior. When he resolves to mend his ways and destroy the 'Chametz,' his repentance will surely reach 'up to HASHEM's Throne of Glory.'

The *Alshich* explains the verse as follows: First we should 'search our ways,' i.e. scrutinize our conduct, both good and bad, and then, when we 'examine' our punishment, we

will discern that we have been justly punished מִכָּה כְּנֹגֶר מִכָּה, 'measure for measure'; commensurate with our misdeeds.

וְנִשְׁוֹבָה עֲרֵה — And return [or: 'and repent'] to HASHEM. The *Midrash* and commentators explain the use of the more forceful עֲרֵה, 'until'; 'up to,' rather than the more direct אֵל, 'to,' by quoting the Talmudic dictum [*Yoma 86b*]: גְּדוּלָּה תְּשׁוּבָה שֶׁמִּגֵּיעַת עַד-כִּסֵּא הַקְּבוֹד, 'Great is repentance for it reaches [עַד] up to the Throne of Glory' Thus, the verse alludes to a concept often stressed by our Sages: A repentant rises above the status of a sinner who falls short of the ideal. Repentance raises one to the level of the most righteous.

41. נִשָּׂא לִבְּנוּ אֶל-כַּפֵּימָּם — Let us lift our hearts with [lit. 'to'] our hands. The translation follows the first of *Rashi's* two interpretations: When we lift our hands [in prayer] to God, let us lift our hearts along with them [i.e. in utmost sincerity] brokenheartedly — before God. Another explanation offered by *Rashi* of אֶל-כַּפֵּימָּם is, 'to the clouds' [to the heavens] as in *I Kings 18:44*, where a cloud is compared to a man's hand.

Prayer is efficacious only when the external 'lifting of the hands' is accompanied by the internal lifting of the heart (*Alshich*) ...

As the *Talmud* explains: A man's

III to HASHEM. ⁴¹ Let us lift our hearts with our hands
41-45 to God in heaven: ⁴² 'We have transgressed and
 rebelled — You have not forgiven.

⁴³ You have enveloped Yourself in anger and pursued us; You have slain mercilessly. ⁴⁴ You wrapped Yourself in a cloud that no prayer can pierce. ⁴⁵ You

prayer is answered only if he takes his heart in his hands [i.e. is sincere] (*Taanis 8a*).

Midrash Lekach Tov comments: We should concentrate on the evil we cause with our hands; when we repent and 'cast it away from our hands' our prayers will be answered. This is comparable to one who is טמא, ritually impure, and holds a שרץ, an impure creeping thing, in his hand while he immerses himself. Until he casts it away, all the water in the world will not make him טהור, ritually pure. [Good intentions are not enough; they must be consistent with a level of active expression.]

(Homiletically, *Rav Velvete Margolies* compares this to *tzedakah*, charity: While dispensing charity, if one's open hand is coupled with a pure heart — then it may be said of him, 'He has lifted his hand with his heart,' and his meritorious deed will surely ascend to 'God in Heaven'.)

[Hand and heart are used together in Scriptures to denote righteousness and sincerity. Compare, for example, *Psalms 24:4* where the righteous are referred to as נקי כפיים ובר לבב, 'clean of hands and pure of heart'].

42. נִחַנּוּ פְּשָׁעֵנוּ — We have transgressed ... You have not forgiven. i.e. in transgressing, we have been true to our nature and Evil Inclination; but You have not conformed

to your Merciful ways — You did not forgive (*Midrash; Rashi; Alshich*).

Ibn Ezra views this verse as a separate lament: We have transgressed — and did not repent. Therefore, You have not forgiven.

43. סָכַנְתָּה בְּאַף וְתַרְדֵּפֶנוּ — You have enveloped Yourself in anger and pursued us. i.e. You placed your anger between Yourself and us [preventing our prayers from reaching Your Attribute of Mercy] and You pursued us with Your wrath (*Rashi*).

Midrash Lekach Tov compares this to a warrior who keeps his shield in front of him to fend off the enemy — while, with his sword, he attacks him.

Ibn Ezra says that Israel is the object of the clause: God flung a cover of wrath over the Jews — depriving them of any avenue of escape from His pursuit.

44. מְעֹבֹר חִפְלָה ... סָכַנְתָּה — You wrapped Yourself in a cloud that no prayer can pierce. [As above, in verse 8: שָׁתַם חִפְלָתִי, He shut out my prayer, i.e. He made himself inaccessible by prayer].

'Cloud' is used here allegorically, as if the cloud formed a barrier between our prayers and HASHEM (*Ibn Ezra*).

The *Talmud* relates that Raba would not proclaim a fast on a cloudy day because 'God wrapped Himself in a cloud that no prayer

פָּצוּ עָלֵינוּ פִּיהֶם כָּל־אֵיבֵינוּ. פָּחַד וּפָחַת מוֹנֵא מוֹמֵז

הָיָה לָנוּ הַשָּׂאת וְהַשְׁכָּר. פִּלְגֵי־מַיִם תָּרַד מִח

עֵינֵי עַל־שֹׁכֵר בַּת־עַמִּי.

עֵינֵי נִגְרָה וְלֹא תִדְמָה מֵאֵין הַפְּגוֹת. עַד־מִטֵּנ

יִשְׁקִיף וַיֵּרָא יְהוָה מִשָּׁמַיִם. עֵינֵי עוֹלָלָה נֹא

לִנְפֹשֵׁי מְכַל בְּנוֹת עִירֵי.

can pierce' (Berachos 32b).

The *Midrash* relates that Rabbi Akiva was once on trial before Tineius Rufus [the Roman governor of Judea]. Joshua haGarsi [the grits dealer] was standing in prayer with Rabbi Akiva. A cloud descended and enveloped them. Joshua said, 'It seems to me that the cloud descended and enveloped us [as a sign from God indicating] that the Rabbi's prayer would not be heard, as it is written: *You wrapped Yourself in a cloud that no prayer can pierce.*'

45. סָחִי וּמָאוֹס — *Filth and refuse*. So *Alshich*: i.e. You have made us contemptible to all our neighbors. *Rashi* translates: *phlegm and mucus*.

The *Midrash* translates: 'You have made us loathsome outcasts.'

The *Targum* (also *Ibn Ezra*) understands the phrase as 'exiled, homeless people have You made us.'

Most commentators explain that this was the outcome of the divine displeasure with Israel that is related in the previous verses. Because God 'hid Himself,' so to speak, from His people, and they appeared to lose His favor entirely, the heathens seized the opportunity and despised the Jew even more.

46. [Verses 46-48 which begin with פ, *pe*, precede, rather than follow, verses 49-51 which begin with the earlier Hebrew letter ע, *ayin*. (See *Comm.* to 2:16).

פָּצוּ עָלֵינוּ פִּיהֶם — *They jeered at us*. Instead of completely ignoring us — as one would normally ignore 'filth and refuse' — our enemies taunted and jeered at us giving us no peace; not even allowing us to wallow, undisturbed, in our misery (*Ibn Yachya*).

47. פָּחַד נִפְחַת הָיָה לָנוּ — *Panic and pitfall* [lit. 'fear and the pit'] were ours. [i.e. Because we feared our enemies, we fled and fell into pitfalls as in *Isaiah* 24:17,18: פָּחַד נִפְחַת וְנָפַח, 'panic, the pit and the trap,' הִנֵּס מִקוֹל הַפָּחַד וַיִּפֹּל אֶל הַנִּפְחַת, 'he who flees from the noise of the panic shall fall into the pit.']

הַשָּׂאת וְהַשְׁכָּר — *Ravage and ruin*. The verse describes the utter desolation — physical and political — in which Judah found itself after the Destruction (*Alshich*).

Toras Chessed comments that the verse implies not that 'ravage and ruin' were the result of the panic and pitfall, but rather that they all came upon the Jews simultaneously.

III made us as filth and refuse among the nations.'

46-51 ⁴⁶ All our enemies jeered at us; ⁴⁷ panic and pitfall were ours, ravage and ruin. ⁴⁸ My eye shed streams of water at the shattering of my people.

⁴⁹ My eye will flow and will not cease — without relief — ⁵⁰ until HASHEM looks down and takes notice from heaven. ⁵¹ My eyes have brought me grief over all the daughters of my city.

Ibn Ezra relates שואה to שאת, sudden catastrophe.

48. פְּלִגְיִימִים תָּרַר עֵינִי — My eyes shed streams of water.

One usually reserves his tears for matters which he hopes will improve with Divine compassion; he sheds tears to evoke God's pity. This crying symbolized Israel's faith and dependence upon God's beneficence until [verse 50]— 'God takes notice from Heaven' (Kiflayim l'Sushiyah).

'Eye' is singular. If only one eye produces such streams of water, how much more so both eyes! (Alshich).

עַל-שִׁבְרֵי בְתֵעָמִי — At the shattering of my people.

I do not cry for my own suffering, but for the ruin of my people (Alshich).

49-50. עֵינִי נִגְרָה — My eye will flow, uncontrollably, losing any resemblance to a healthy eye (Rav Almosnino).

עַד-וַיִּשְׁקֶף — Until HASHEM looks down and takes notice [lit. 'and will see'] from heaven. [This is a continuation of the previous verse; my tears will not cease until HASHEM looks down and takes notice!] as if

the heavens had a window through which He peers through (Ibn Ezra).

According to the commentators [e.g. Lechem Dim'ah; Alshich; Kiflayim l'Sushiyah] וַיִּשְׁקֶף, 'looks down,' implies evil, and וַיִּרְאָה, 'see, take notice', implies good. Thus: 'Until HASHEM looks down' — at our enemies, for evil; 'and takes notice' — of us, for the good.

51. עֵינִי עוֹלָלָה לְנַפְשִׁי — My eye has brought me grief. [lit. 'my eye has aggrieved my soul']. i.e. My eyes grieve when I am introspective and view my condition (Kiflayim l'Sushiyah).

This is a personal lament of Jeremiah who was of an aristocratic priestly family. He anguished that his weeping eye figuratively contorted his face and aggrieved his spirit more than any inhabitant of the city. His family was particularly affected, and suffered more than others because, as priests, they had been selected for holiness and the service of God (Rashi).

מִכָּל בָּנוֹת עִירִי — Over [or 'from'] all the daughters of my city. This phrase can be translated in several ways:

a. According to Rashi (above); b. 'I shed more tears and grieved more than all the daughters of my city —

סרָק ג נבֿינג צוד צְרוּנִי בַצֶּפֶר אִיבֵי חָנָם. צָמְתוּ בְבוֹר
נבֿינֵנו נד חֲזִי וַיִּדּוּ-אָבֶן בִּי. צָפוּ-מִים עַל-רֹאשִׁי
אָמַרְתִּי נגוֹרְתִּי.

נח־נו קָרָאתִי שְׁמֶךָ יְהוָה מְבוֹר תַּחְתִּיּוֹת. קוֹלִי
שָׁמַעַתָּ אֶל-תַּעֲלָם אֲזִנָּךְ לְרוֹחַתִּי
נז לְשׁוֹעַתִּי. קִרְבְּתָּ בַיּוֹם אֶקְרָאָךְ אָמַרְתָּ

even though women are more prone to cry' (Ibn Ezra); c. My tears had a greater penitent effect on me than did all the daughters of my city (Alshich); d. I am aggrieved 'on account of' ['from all'] the daughters of my people' — and their miserable plight; my own suffering is secondary (Ibn Shu'ib).

[There is a similar semantic problem in Ruth 1:13, בִּי מָר לִי — 'for I am very embittered on account of you'. See commentary to Artscroll edition, page 77.]

52. צוד צְרוּנִי — *I have been constantly ensnared.* [The literal translation of this double verb is 'snare, they ensnared me' which the Alshich translates 'time and time again have they ensnared me'.]

[As in Hoshea 7:12 'I will bring them down like the birds in the sky.']

חָנָם אִיבֵי חָנָם — *By my enemies without cause.* According to Ibn Ezra, חָנָם, without cause, modifies אִיבֵי, my enemies: i.e. *I was ensnared like a bird by my enemies who hate me without due cause.*

Alshich interprets חָנָם as modifying the verb צְרוּנִי, 'I have been ensnared.' i.e. *For absolutely no reason — benefitting neither them nor me — have I been constantly ensnared by my enemy.*

53. צָמְתוּ בְבוֹר חֲזִי — *They cut off my life in a pit. i.e. a dungeon (Rashi).*

Reminiscent of the tribulations of Joseph [Genesis 39:20]; Jeremiah [Jeremiah 38:6]; and Daniel [Daniel 6:18].

וַיִּדּוּ-אָבֶן בִּי — *They threw stones [lit. 'a stone'] at me. i.e. they rolled a stone over the mouth of the pit as was done to Daniel [Daniel 6:18] and Jeremiah prophetically foresaw it. Also, 'casting me and cutting off my life in a pit' was not enough:*

They were not satisfied until they sealed it with a boulder (Rashi).

They rolled a large stone over the pit [to entrap and suffocate me]; or, they threw stones at me to ascertain whether I was still alive (Ibn Ezra).

54. ... צָפוּ-מִים עַל-רֹאשִׁי — *Waters flowed over my head; I thought: 'I am doomed!'*. When a man is in water up to his hips, there is still hope, but when water — here allegorically referring to the heathen nations — flows over one's head, one gives up all hope. However, the next verse continues, in this case I did not lose hope. Rather, קָרָאתִי שְׁמֶךָ ה', *I called on Your name, HASHEM' (Rashi).*

אָמַרְתִּי נגוֹרְתִּי — *I thought [lit. 'I said':] 'I am doomed!'* 'I am cut off from the world' (Targum).

52-57 ⁵² I have been constantly ensnared like a bird by my enemies without cause. ⁵³ They cut off my life in a pit and threw stones at me. ⁵⁴ Waters flowed over my head; I thought; 'I am doomed!'

⁵⁵ I called on Your name, HASHEM, from the depths of the pit. ⁵⁶ You have heard my voice; do not shut your ear from my prayer for my relief when I cry out. ⁵⁷ You always drew near on the day I would

55. קראתי שמך ה' — I called on Your name, HASHEM.

Rashi interprets this verse as a continuation of the previous verse [see above.]

Lechem Dim'ah, Alshich, Kiflayim l'Sushiyah link this verse both with the previous verse and with verses 56-58, as a prayer for deliverance. The prophet remembered confidently that when he had found himself in great danger in the past, he would call to God — invoking His name without lengthy prayers — and God would immediately respond to his cry.

שמך ה' — Your name, HASHEM. When one is in great anguish, drained of strength, he merely calls out the name of a passerby with such anguish that the hearer immediately discerns the gravity of the situation and responds. Here, too, he simply called God's name hoping that קולי שמעתה You heard my voice, and therefore אל תעלם אזנך You would not turn Your ear from my prayer for my relief when I cry out' (*Kiflayim l'Sushiyah*).

'As Jonah called upon You from inside the fish and from the depths of the sea, so does Israel call upon You from its exile among the nations, — likened to the depths of a

pit — to hear their prayers and deliver them (*Midrash Lekach Tov*).

56. קולי שמעתה — You have heard my voice. In the past, You responded merely to the sound of my voice, and did not ignore my supplications (*Alshich*).

אל תעלם אזנך — Do not shut Your ear. Now when I call to You in utter despair, invoking not only Your name, but also crying and supplicating ceaselessly, please do not ignore my cries (*Lechem Dim'ah*).

לרנחתי — From my prayer for my relief [lit. 'to relieve me']. This paraphrased translation follows Targum and most commentators. [Compare *Esther* 4:14: רנח וְהַצֵּלָה: 'Relief and deliverance'].

The *Palgei Mayim* explains רנחתי as being related to רנח, space, breach, and in this verse Israel beseeches God שִׁירְנוּךָ מְקוֹם, that He 'make a breach in the barrier' separating us from our Father in Heaven and allow our prayers to enter.

57. קרבתך ביום אקראך — You always drew near on the day I would call you. i.e. immediately; as soon as I would call upon You, You would draw near and say 'Do not be afraid' (*Alshich*).

נח-סב רַבָּת אֶדְנִי רִיבִי נִפְשִׁי גֹאֲלָתָּ חַיִּי. רְאִיתָהּ
ס יְהוָה עֲנֵתָתִי שְׁפָטָה מִשְׁפָּטִי. רְאִיתָהּ
כָּל-נִקְמָתָם כָּל-מַחְשַׁבְתָּם לִי.
סא שְׁמַעְתָּ חֲרָפָתָם יְהוָה כָּל-מַחְשַׁבְתָּם עָלַי.
סב שְׁפָתַי קָמִי וְהִגִּיוֹנָם עָלַי כָּל-הַיּוֹם.

The *Lechem Dim'ah* notes the use of the imperfect future tense אֶקְרָאךָ, lit. 'I will call You' instead of the past tense 'I called you.' He explains that in former times God would not only 'Hear my voice' and respond, but would draw near even before 'I would call You,' because God anticipated my call and comforted me in advance.

אל תִּירָא — 'Do not be afraid! [The utterance 'Do not be afraid!' is a constant refrain throughout Scripture — and was said not only on segregated occasions but to virtually every one of the fathers of our people; it is a divine promise that Israel need not fear. To mention several: 'Fear not Avram, I am your shield' (Gen. 15:1); 'Fear not, (Isaac)' (Gen. 26:24); 'Fear not, (Jacob) to go down to Egypt' (Gen. 46:3); 'Fear him not, (Moses) . . .' (Numbers 21:34); 'Fear not, (Children of Israel) nor be discouraged' (Deut. 1:21); 'Fear not, (Joshua), nor be dismayed' (Josh. 8:1); to Gideon (Judges 6:23); to Elijah (11 Kings 1:15); to Hezekiah (11 Kings 19:6); to Isaiah (Isaiah 7:4); to Jeremiah (Jeremiah 1:8);

'Servant Yaakov' (Jeremiah 30:10); to Daniel (Daniel 10:12).]

58. רַבָּת ה' רִיבִי נִפְשִׁי — You always championed my cause, O Lord: [lit. You fought, O Lord, the battles of my soul.] — not only did you — in former times — draw near and comfort me, You even used to fight my battles for me! (*Lechem Dim'ah*).

Interpreted on a deeper level, the verse says that God assisted in the 'battle of the soul' i.e. the perpetual battle within man between the good and evil inclination, helping man's good inclination prevail, thus 'redeeming my life' (*Ibn Shu'ib*).

The import of these verses is that just as HASHEM had been so 'near' to the Jews in the past, now, too, he should respond to their prayers and display compassion (*Lechem Dim'ah*).

59. רְאִיתָהּ ה' עֲנֵתָתִי — You have seen, HASHEM the injustices I suffer — [lit. 'You have seen, HASHEM my perversions.'] i.e. 'the injustices my enemy perpetrates upon me' (*Rashi*).*

* To illustrate these injustices, the Midrash relates an incident which happened at the time of the Destruction of the Second Temple:

A Jew once passed in front of Hadrian [the Roman Emperor] and greeted him. 'Who are you?' the emperor asked. 'I am a Jew,' came the reply. 'What! a Jew passing in front of Hadrian and greeting him!' exclaimed the emperor. 'Take him away and cut his head off!'

III call You; You said, 'Do not be afraid.'

58-63 ⁵⁸ You always championed my cause, O Lord, you redeemed my life. ⁵⁹ You have seen, HASHEM, the injustices I suffer; judge my cause. ⁶⁰ You have seen all their vengeance, all their designs against me.

⁶¹ You have heard their insults, HASHEM; all their designs regarding me. ⁶² The speech and thoughts of my enemies are against me all day long. ⁶³ Look, in

שָׁפְטָה מִשְׁפָּטִי — Judge my cause. [lit. He judged my judgment]. Although the verb is in past tense, *Targum*; *Rashi*, and most commentators understand this clause as a plea [compare 1:21 הִבֵּאתָ, O bring on].

'God! No one can judge besides You' (*Midrash Lekach Tov*).

60. רְאִיתָה בְּלִי-נִקְמָתָם — You have seen all their vengeance — Both what they publicly carried out, and their plans of revenge (*Ibn Ezra*).

Palgei Mayim explains the verses thus: 'Even though we Jews are deserving of punishment, nevertheless we beseech You to judge us Yourself and not pass our judgment into our enemies' hands because 'You have seen all their vengeance, all their designs against me'— only from You can justice be had. Let us be in Your hands, not theirs.

61-63. שָׁמַעְתָּ חֲרָפָתָם — You have heard their insults, HASHEM. *Alshich* translates the verse as referring to their blasphemies against HASHEM, i.e. You have heard how they reviled You, HASHEM, and how

they designed against me.

Most commentators, however, see *Israel* as being the object of their insults, and explain verses 61-63 as referring to designs of the enemy — in thought, word and action.

Thus: בְּלִי-מַחְשָׁבָתָם עָלַי, all their designs against me represent 'thought'; שִׁפְתֵי קָמִי, the speech of my enemies represent 'word'; שִׁכְתָּם וְקִימָתָם, their sitting down and rising up represent 'action' (*Kiflayim l'Sushiyah*).

שִׁפְתֵי קָמִי וְהַגִּיּוֹנִים — The speech and thoughts [lit. 'Meditation'] of my enemies [lit. 'of those who rise against me']

[This is a continuation of the previous verse: You have heard, HASHEM . . .]

בְּלִי-הַיּוֹם — All day long. Even though my enemies already accomplished many of their evil plans, their mind is not at ease. They continue to plan and talk about me incessantly all day long, as if their power of speech was given them just to deride me (*Lechem Dim'ah*).

Later, another Jew who had learned of this incident, passed in front of Hadrian and did not greet him. The emperor asked 'Who are you?' 'I am a Jew,' he answered. 'How dare a Jew fail to greet the emperor!', the emperor exclaimed. 'Take him away and cut his head off!'

The senators could not understand his inconsistencies, and questioned him. He answered, angrily: 'Do you presume to advise me how to dispose of those hated people?'

פרק ג **סג** שבתם וקמתם הביטה אני מנגינתם.
סד תשיב להם גמול יהוה כמעשה ידיהם.
סה תתן להם מגנת-לב תאלתה להם.
סו תרדף באף ותשמידם מתחת שמי יהוה.

פרק ד **א** איכה יועם וזהב ישנא הכתם הטוב
א תשתפכנה אבני-קדש בראש כל-
 חוצות.

Look, in everything they do. [lit. 'Their sitting down and their rising up behold'] i.e. God, take note of every action in their lives; their hatred is all-consuming and relentless (*Ibn Shu'ib*).

I am the butt of their taunts. [lit. 'I am their song' (*Ibn Ezra*); the subject of their taunting songs (*Midrash*).

[Compare 3:14.]

[Thus, Israel begs HASHEM to listen, observe and take up their cause against enemies who are constantly vindictive and taunting.]

64-66. [In the verses that follow HASHEM is asked to mete out retribution to Israel's enemies, in kind, for all their evil.]

As they have done.

I.e. for having acted in consonance with, and as emissaries of, God's will in bringing about punishment to Israel—for that they are absolved. However, כמעשה, בריקום for what they added 'of their own hands' i.e. of their viciousness

and overzealousness beyond the bounds expected of them — for that HASHEM is asked to punish them [see comm. to 1:9 s.v. הגדיל] (*Lechem Dim'ah*).

Give them a broken heart. So *Rashi* and *Midrash* and *Alshich* [i.e. a heart full of grief.]

Another interpretation is 'hardness of heart' (*Midrash*) — i.e. make them capable of receiving much punishment (*Ibn Yachya*), and take away from them the realization that You are the cause of their suffering so that their heart will remain hard and they will not repent (*Rav Yonasan Eyebescheutz*).

May your curse be upon them! — i.e. bring upon them all the curses mentioned in the Torah (*Alshich*).

Pursue them in anger. [With the same anger with which You pursued us (verse 43).]

And destroy them from under the

III everything they do, I am the butt of their taunts.
 64-66 ⁶⁴ Pay them back their due, HASHEM, as they have
 done. ⁶⁵ Give them a broken heart; may Your curse
 be upon them! ⁶⁶ Pursue them in anger and destroy
 them from under the heavens of HASHEM.

IV **A**las — The gold is dimmed! The finest gold is
 1 changed! Sacred stones are scattered at every
 street corner!

heavens of HASHEM — Don't
 punish them with exile, as You
 punished us. Destroy them from
 the face of the earth (Rav Galanti).

The obliteration should be so
 complete that they should have no
 descendants, and that no one will be

able to say, 'This tree, or camel, or
 lamb belongs to him [i.e. there will
 be no trace of identity left]
 (Midrash).

[Thus, with the plea that God ut-
 terly wipe out the enemy, the
 chapter closes.]

IV

1. **אֵיכָה יוֹעַם זָהָב** — *Alas — the gold
 is dimmed!* The 'gold' figuratively
 refers to the people of Jerusalem. It
 has become 'covered over', i.e. dull
 only in its external appearance and
 brilliance, but not in substance
 (Midrash; Rashi; Ibn Yachya).

Rashi comments that this elegy
 was originally pronounced over
יִאֲשִׁיָּהוּ King Josiah, as mentioned in
 II Chronicles 35:25. Jeremiah also
 incorporated within it the refer-
 ences to Zion.

The Midrash explains the verse:
Alas — the gold, i.e. King Josiah
 who was like a golden ornament, to
 his people, *has become dim*, etc.

זָהָב — *The gold* — The brilliance of
 their faces (Rashi).

וַיִּשְׁנֶה הַכֶּתֶם הַטּוֹב — *The finest gold is
 changed.* In appearance (Rashi).

וַיִּשְׁתַּפְּכֵהָ אֲבֵי־קֶרֶשׁ — *Sacred stones
 are scattered* [lit. 'poured out'].
 'Sacred stones' refer to the children
 who have the brilliance of fine
 jewels. According to the Midrash,
 the 'sacred stones' that 'poured out'
 alludes to Jeremiah's lament over
 each **רֵבִיעִית**, *revi's measure* (ap-
 proximately half a glass), of blood
 which poured out from each of
 Josiah's arrow wounds. Jeremiah
 collected the blood and buried it [on
 the battlefield] where it was spilled
 (Rashi).

The Midrash says that 'sacred
 stones' alludes to the Torah scholars
 [who are referred to as 'stones',

פֶּרֶק ד' ב' בְּנֵי צִיּוֹן הַיְקָרִים הַמְסֻלָּאִים בְּפֹז אֵיכָה
 בִּיה נֶחֱשְׁבוּ לְנִבְלֵי־חֶרֶשׁ מַעֲשֵׂה יְדֵי יוֹצֵר.
 ג' יִתְנִים ק' גַּם־תִּנִּין חֲלָצוּ שֶׁר הַיְנִיקוּ גִּוְרֵיהֶן בַּת־
 יִכְעֲנִים ק' עַמִּי לֹא־כֹזֵר בִּי עֲנִים בַּמִּדְבָּר.
 ד' דָּבָק לָשׁוֹן יוֹנֵק אֶל־חֶבֶו בְּצִמָּא עוֹלָלִים
 שָׂאֵלוּ לָחֶם פֶּרֶשׁ אֵין לָהֶם.
 ה' הָאֲכָלִים לְמַעַדְנִים נִשְׁמוּ בַחוּצוֹת

'foundations' — (*Torah Temimah*)). Because of destitution they had to go out and seek their livelihood, and they were thus 'poured out at every street corner.'

Midrash Lekach Tov explains that this refers to the blood of the righteous — who are compared to 'sacred stones' — which was spilled at every street corner.

2. בְּנֵי צִיּוֹן הַיְקָרִים — *The precious children of Zion*. [The verse laments how Zion's precious inhabitants, once greatly esteemed, are now treated like common clay].

Midrash Lekach Tov, commenting on the precious character of the people of Jerusalem, notes that when residents of Jerusalem sat down to eat they would hang a cloth over their door as a signal to the poor that they might come to share their meal [see also *Bava Basra* 93b].

הַמְסֻלָּאִים בְּפֹז — *Who are comparable to fine gold*, i.e. whoever sees them compares their beauty to fine gold (*Rashi*).

אֵיכָה נֶחֱשְׁבוּ לְנִבְלֵי־חֶרֶשׁ — *Alas — they are treated like earthen jugs — which break easily, and once broken, are irreparable and valueless (Alshich).*

3. גַּם־תִּנִּים חֲלָצוּ שֶׁר — *Even 'Tanim' will offer the breast*. [The word תִּנִּים 'Tanim' refers to a wild animal but its exact identity is unknown. The word usually means 'reptile' or 'fish' and in modern Hebrew, תַּן means 'jackal.' Since the specific guidance of Talmudic sources is lacking, we have left the word untranslated.]

Although 'Tanim' are vicious, they display warmth and kindness to their young by nursing them. Jeremiah laments how, as a result of the ravages and stress of famine, the usually compassionate Jewish mothers became cruel and placed their own lives before their children's. They consumed whatever food was available, and allowed their children to go hungry, ignoring their cries for food (*Rashi*).

According to many commentators 'Tanim' figuratively refers to the vicious enemy who חֲלָצוּ שֶׁר — bared the breast, i.e. forced Jewish women to nurse their enemy's children with the tragic result that the nursing mothers had no milk left for their own children. The Jewish daughters, unable to respond to the needs of their children who cried like ostriches in the desert, seemed to be אֶכָזֵר, cruel (*Alshich, Palgei Mayim*).

At very least, the Jews could ex-

² *The precious children of Zion, who are comparable to fine gold — alas, are now treated like earthen jugs, work of a potter.*

³ *Even 'Tanim' will offer the breast and suckle their young; the daughter of my people has become cruel, like ostriches in the desert.*

⁴ *The tongue of the suckling cleaves to its palate for thirst; young children beg for bread, no one extends it to them.*

⁵ *Those who feasted extravagantly, lie destitute*

pect that the enemy's children who were nursed by Jewish women should display some compassion for the women who reared them. This, too, was not forthcoming. They were as cruel as ostriches in the desert (*Lechem Dim'ah*).

ביענים במדבר — *Like ostriches in the desert*, i.e. like ostriches born in the desert who are noted for their extreme cruelty to their young. (*Ibn Shu'ib*).

[Compare Job 39:16 where the ostrich is described as follows: 'She is hardened against her young ones as if they were not hers.']

4. *כִּי לִשְׁׁמָהּ . . . רָבָק* — *The tongue of the suckling . . . for thirst*. Since, in the previous verse, 'the daughter of my people has become cruel' the sucklings who depend on their mothers for milk are described as dying of thirst, whereas the *עוֹלָלִים*, the young children; the toddlers beg for bread (*Kiflayim l'Sushiyah*).

The *Midrash* relates how the enemy also destroyed the conduits which carried water through the land. Even when a father took his thirsty child to the conduit, he found no water.

עוֹלָלִים שְׁאֵלוּ לֶחֶם — *Young children beg for bread*. Their mothers having nursed the enemy's children, they beg for bread in return. But there was no response; not even a morsel (*Alshich*).

פָּרַשׁ אֵין לָהֶם — *No one extends it to them*. [This translation follows *Targum*.] *Alshich*, and *Ibn Ezra*, following one interpretation of the *Midrash* relate *פָּרַשׁ* to *פְּרוּשָׁה* [= *פרושה*] 'morsel of bread; and translate 'they haven't a morsel'; or 'no one gives them a morsel.'

Homiletically, *Shaar Bas Rabim* notes that an older child asking for bread during a famine, can understand why there is none; but for a young child, no explanation will suffice. Therefore, translating *פָּרַשׁ* as if it were spelled with a *shin*, meaning *מְפָרֵשׁ*, one who explains: *עוֹלָלִים שְׁאֵלוּ לֶחֶם* — 'very young children beg for bread; *פָּרַשׁ אֵין לָהֶם*, no one can explain it to them.'

5. In this verse Jeremiah further laments the fall of the people from their previous heights to the nethermost depths to which they have fallen. People who were brought up eating only the finest delicacies and

פָּרָק ד הָאֲמִינִים עָלֵי תוֹלַע חִבְקוּ אֲשָׁפוֹתוֹת.
רִט וַיִּגְדֵּל עֶזְרָא בֶּת-עָמִי מִחֲטָאת סֶלֶם
הַהִפּוּכָה כְּמוֹ-רָגַע וְלֹא-חָלוּ בָּהּ יָדִים.
ו וַיָּבֹאוּ זִוְרֵיהָ מִשְׁלַג צָחוּ מִחֶלֶב אֲדָמוּ עֵצִם
מִפְּנִינִים סָפִיר גִּזְרָתָם.
ח חֲשֵׁךְ מִשְׁחֹר תֵּאָרֶם לֹא נִכְרוּ בַּחוּצוֹת
צָפַד עוֹרָם עַל-עֵצֵמָם יָבֵשׁ הָיָה כְּעֵץ.
ט טוֹבִים הָיוּ חֲלִי-חֶרֶב מִחֲלָלֵי רֵעֵב שֶׁהֵם
יָבֹאוּ מִדְּקָרִים מִתְּנוּבוֹת שָׂדֵי.

dressed only in the most luxurious clothing, lay faint from hunger in the streets, and scrounged through garbage heaps for the most meager scraps of food (*Lechem Dimah*).

הָאֲכָלִים לִמְעַנִּים — *Those who feasted* [lit. 'ate'] *extravagantly*. The commentators note that the phrase is not הָאֲכָלִים מְעַנִּים, 'who ate delicacies' i.e. who ate delicacies to satisfy their hunger. But rather the prefix ל, lamed [to] makes the word לִמְעַנִּים an adjective, i.e. they ate "extravagantly," even when they weren't hungry — such was the degree of abundance before the Destruction. These were the people who now swooned from hunger! (*Alshich*)

הָאֲמִינִים עָלֵי תוֹלַע — *Those who were brought up* ['reared'] *in scarlet*. The word אֲמִינִים, *reared* is related to אָמַן as in *Esther* 2:7 נִהְיָ אָמַן אֶת הַרְקָה 2:7, 'And he had reared Hadassah'.

חִבְקוּ אֲשָׁפוֹתוֹת — *Wallow* [lit. 'embrace'] *garbage*. i.e. they search through garbage — no longer concerned with delicacies or fine clothing — just searching for scraps of discarded food (*Lechem Dim'ah*); or, according to the *Midrash*: they

lay [dead] on dunghills.

6. וַיִּגְדֵּל עֶזְרָא — *The iniquity ... is greater than the sin of Sodom*. The punishment of Zion, greater than that of Sodom [see next comm.], proves that their iniquity was greater than Sodom's (*Rashi*).

הַהִפּוּכָה כְּמוֹ-רָגַע — *Which was overturned in a moment*. i.e. Sodom was destroyed instantly — without the suffering of a prolonged siege. Hence its sin is considered not as grave as Jerusalem's which was punished with famine, sieges, war — and an exile which still endures! (*Rashi*; *Lechem Dim'ah*)

וְלֹא-חָלוּ בָּהּ יָדִים — *Without mortal hands being laid on her*. ['Mortal' is not in the Hebrew, but is necessitated by the context.] i.e. Sodom was destroyed, not by a mortal enemy, but by angels (*Rashi*), unlike Zion. There the enemy wrought suffering upon suffering — until the people couldn't wait for the 'freedom' of death (*Alshich*).

The *Targum* [understands יָד, *hand*, in the sense of ה' יָד, a prophetic vision, and] translates this phrase: *And no prophets prophesied her downfall to make*

in the streets; those who were brought up in scarlet clothing wallow garbage.

⁶ The iniquity of the daughter of my people is greater than the sin of Sodom, which was overturned in a moment without mortal hands being laid on her.

⁷ Her princes were purer than snow, whiter than milk; their appearance was ruddier than rubies, their outline was like sapphire.

⁸ Their appearance has become blacker than soot, they are not recognized in the streets; their skin has shriveled on their bones, it became dry as wood.

⁹ More fortunate were the victims of the sword than the victims of famine, for they pine away, stricken, lacking the fruits of the field.

her repent her ways. [Unlike Zion which ignored the warnings of many prophets.]

7-8 [The dramatic 'then and now' comparisons demonstrate the ravages of famine and war upon the nobility. Formerly they were prince-like figures of grace and nobility, while now they are 'blacker than soot.']

נְזִירֶיהָ — Her princes [Heb. 'N'zireha']. (Most commentators, including Rashi.) Rashi adds that in his opinion the word should be translated 'her Nazirites' because they were exceedingly handsome.

In any case, the subjects of the phrase are the Jews [not Sodomites.]

צָחוּ מִחֶלֶב — They were whiter than milk. The Midrash translates: 'they became white from [drinking] milk.' (The Talmud recommends that if one wants his daughter to have a bright complexion, he should give her milk to drink [Kesubos 59b].)

סָפִיר גִּזְרָתָם — Their outline was like sapphire. This translation follows most commentators. The Midrash, homiletically explaining גִּזְרָתָם, as 'their decrees', translates: 'every decree which befell Jerusalem was hard as sapphire.'

מִשְׁחֹר — From soot [This translation follows the Midrash.]

לֹא נִכְרָו בַּחוּצוֹת — They are not recognized in the streets. The Midrash relates of Rav Zadok that the ravages of the Destruction bore so hard upon him that his body never returned to normal although he lived for many years after the Destruction.

טוֹבִים הָיוּ חֲלִי-יָרֵב. — The victims of the sword were better off . . . or: 'The good [people] were the victims of the sword' because they died a swift death, one preferable to the slow agony of famine (Alshich).

שָׁהִם יָזְבוּ מִדְּקָרִים מִתְּנוּבוֹת שָׂדֵי — For they [i.e. the victims of famine] pine

פרק ד י יְדֵי נָשִׁים רָחֲמָנִיּוֹת בְּשָׁלוֹ וְלִדְהֶן הָיוּ
 לְבָרוֹת לָמוֹ בְּשֶׁבֶר בֶּת-עָמִי.
 יא בָּלָה יְהוָה אֶת-חֲמָתוֹ שֶׁפָּר חֲרוֹן אַפּוֹ
 וַיִּצַּת-אֵשׁ בְּצִיּוֹן וַתֹּאכַל יִסְדֹּתֶיהָ.
 יב לֹא הָאֲמִינוּ מַלְכֵי-אֶרֶץ וְכָל יֹשְׁבֵי תְּבֵל
 כִּי יָבֹא צָר וְאוֹיֵב בְּשַׁעְרֵי יְרוּשָׁלַם.
 יג מִחֲטָאת נְבִיאֶיהָ עֹונָת כְּהֻנָּהּ הַשִּׁפְכִּים
 בְּקִרְבָּהּ דָּם צַדִּיקִים.

away, stricken, from the produce of my field.

[This phrase is difficult. The literal translation might be 'they pine away, (or: 'flow'), pierced from the produce of my field.' Rashi, Targum, and Alshich explain that the hunger was more severe because they ate thistles which damaged their intestines, and they pined away in great pain.]

Rav Saadiah Gaon, *Lechem Dim'ah* and the Midrash explain the phrase: 'For they pined away, suffering from the lack of produce of my field,' for to be 'pierced' by hunger is to die a slow death.*

Alshich explains that the use of יְדֵי 'my field' rather than שָׂדֶה 'field' emphasizes the irony of the tragedy. Zion is the speaker; it is 'her field' and still her people could not partake of its fruit.

10. [The extent of the depravity is described. (see also 2:20).]

Hands of — יְדֵי נָשִׁים רָחֲמָנִיּוֹת...

compassionate women have boiled their own children.

The impending Destruction, and the ravages and famine of war caused compassionate mothers to become so depraved that with their own hands they boiled their children and they consumed them without even leaving flesh for other members of the family (Alshich).

Rav Almosnino comments that they boiled their own dead children — but did not murder them.

The Shelah comments that this phrase also contains moralistic criticism of overly compassionate and over-indulgent mothers who, for example, let their children sleep late rather than go to synagogue or to school. With this 'misplaced compassion' they 'roast' and destroy their children's souls.

11. בָּלָה ה' אֶת-חֲמָתוֹ — HASHEM vented His fury. The fury, pent up within Him for many years [see *comm.* to 2:8], was vented when He exacted vengeance upon them.

* The Midrash elaborates:

At the Destruction of the First Temple, people died from the smell of the spoiled food [which they were compelled to eat during the siege]; but at the Destruction of the Second Temple there was not even such food to eat. What did the enemy do to them? They roasted kids to the west of the city [and the wind carried the smell to the starving, besieged inhabitants]. The smell roused their appetites so that they died, in fulfillment of what is written, 'for they pine away, stricken, lacking the fruits of the field.'

¹⁰ Hands of compassionate women have boiled their own children; they became their food when the daughter of my people was shattered.

¹¹ HASHEM vented His fury, He poured out His fierce anger; He kindled a fire in Zion which consumed its foundations.

¹² The kings of the earth did not believe, nor did any of the world's inhabitants, that the adversary or enemy could enter the gates of Jerusalem.

¹³ It was for the sins of her prophets, the iniquities of her priests, who had shed in her midst the blood of the righteous.

וַיִּצְתֹּאשׁ בְּצִיּוֹן — He kindled a fire in Zion. i.e. His fury, which is compared to a consuming fire [as in 2:3] (Ibn Ezra).

וְנִתְאֲכַל יְסֻדֶּיהָ — Which consumed her foundations. It is written — (Psalms 79:1): מִזְמוֹר לְאַסָּף, A psalm of Asaph; God! The heathen has come into Your inheritance. . .

People said to Asaph: God has caused Temple and Sanctuary to be destroyed and you sit singing a psalm! Asaph replied: 'I sing a psalm because the Holy One, blessed be He poured out His wrath upon wood and stone, and not upon Israel. As is written: He kindled a fire in Zion which consumed its foundations [but not its people; see comm. 2:5,6; Overview] (Midrash).

12. לֹא הָאֲמִינוּ מְלֻכֵי-אָרֶץ — The kings of the earth did not [or 'could not'] believe. The miraculous defeat

of Sennacherib [11 Chronicles 32] created the impression that Jerusalem was impregnable (Midrash Lekach Tov).

They didn't realize that because its sanctity had been defiled, it had become vulnerable (Alshich). *

13. מִחַטָּאת נְבִיאֶיהָ — It was for the sins of her prophets. i.e. she became vulnerable to such calamity because of the sins of her false prophets (Rashi).

According to the Midrash this verse refers to the murder of Zechariah [II Chronicles 24:21] who was a prophet and priest. When King Joash sought to introduce idolatry, Zechariah fearlessly protested. The king ordered that he be stoned to death in the Temple [see excerpt from Midrash on verse 2:20]. Hence, according to this, the verse should be translated: 'It was

* The Midrash relates that there were four kings who made requests in an ascending scale: David, Asa, Jehoshaphat and Hezekiah:

David said, 'Let me pursue my enemies and overtake them' and God agreed [I Sam. 30:8]; . . . Asa stood up and said: 'I do not have the strength to slay them, but I will pursue them and 'You will do the slaying,' and God agreed'. [II Chron. 14:10];

. . . Jehoshaphat stood up and said: 'I have the strength neither to slay nor to pursue, but I

פָּרַק ר יד נָעוּ עֲוֵרִים בְּחוּצוֹת נִגְאָלוּ בְּדָם בְּלֹא
 יִדְטוּ יִוְכְּלוּ יִגְעוּ בְּלִבְשֵׁיהֶם.
 טו סֹרֵרוּ טָמְא קָרְאוּ לָמוּ סֹרֵרוּ סֹרֵרוֹ אֶל-
 תַּגְעוּ כִּי נִצּוּ גַם-נָעוּ אָמְרוּ בְּגוֹיִם לֹא
 יוֹסִפוּ לָגוֹר.
 טז פָּנֵי יְהוָה חִלְקָם לֹא יוֹסִיף לְהַבִּיטָם פָּנֵי

for the sins *against* her prophets . . .
 against her priests that they shed in
 her midst the blood of the
 righteous.'

Palgei Mayim elaborates on the
 continuity of verses 12 and 13: The
 prospect of Jerusalem's fall was so
 inconceivable that it could only
 have been the result of 'the sins of
 her prophets, etc.

[These prophets gave her false
 security by indulging in deceptive
 oracles, and did not exhort her to re-
 pent. (See *Comm.* to 2:14 where the
 false prophets are blamed for lulling
 Israel into the belief that Nebu-
 chadnezzar would never enter
 Jerusalem or that the Temple would
 never be destroyed.) Compare
*Jeremiah 8:10-12: From prophet to
 priest everyone deals falsely, for
 they have healed the hurt of my
 people superficially by saying
 'Peace Peace; when there is no
 peace.' . . . Therefore they shall fall
 among the fallen.* This caused the
 blood of the righteous to be shed in
 their midst.]

A different approach is taken by
Rav Alkabetz in interpreting verses
 12-13: The priests and prophets of
 Israel were renowned throughout

the world for their holiness and
 sincerity. Therefore: 'The kings of
 the earth could not believe that
 Jerusalem would be made vulner-
 able as a result of any sins, and if it
 were to become subject to conquest,
 it could not be on the fault of her
 priests or prophets.

14.-15. נָעוּ עֲוֵרִים בְּחוּצוֹת — *The
 blind wandered through the streets.*
 This translation follows *Rashi* who
 explains: When the blind wandered
 through the streets their feet slipped
 in the blood of the murdered Jews
 who lay throughout the city.

Ibn Ezra interprets עֲוֵרִים as an
 adverb and translates: 'they wan-
 dered through the streets *blindly*.'

[Following *Ibn Ezra* it is perhaps
 possible to interpret this verse as a
 continuation of the previous one
 which blames the false prophets for
 the calamity: Those prophets who
 were supposed to be the 'eyes' of
 the nation (or the masses them-
 selves who blindly followed them)
 wandered about like blind men —
 not knowing where to turn—wal-
 lowing in blood which defiled them].

נִגְאָלוּ בְּדָם — *Defiled with blood.*
 They became so bloodstained that

will utter a song and You will do the slaying and pursuing; and God agreed [*II Chron.* 20:22]

. . . Hezekiah stood up and said: 'I have the strength neither to slay nor to pursue nor to ut-
 ter a song. I will sleep on my bed and You will do all these things; and God agreed [*II Kings*
 19:35]

Nebuchadnezzar was one of the survivors of this war. When God told him 'Go up and

IV

14-16 ¹⁴ *The blind wandered through the streets, defiled with blood, so that none could touch their garments.*

¹⁵ *'Away, unclean one!' people shouted at them; 'Away! Away! Don't Touch! For they are loathsome and wander about.' The nations had said: 'they will not sojourn again.'*

¹⁶ *The anger of HASHEM has divided them, caring*

people had to refrain from touching them [because of defilement.] Instead, they called out to them: סורו טמא, *'Away you unclean one, spattered with blood!'* (Rashi).

סורו טמא — *Away you unclean one.* Rashi [in preceding comment] interprets this as a direct statement by the people to the stumbling, blood-spattered blind men.

Alshich sees this as an indirect warning to all passers-by regarding them: *'Away! Unclean! Keep away from these unclean people who are defiled by the dead!'*

כי נצו — *For they are loathsome.* [This translation follows Rashi: (see also Rashi to Leviticus 1:16 s.v. (בנצתה); and most commentators. The bloodstains and defilement make them loathsome.)]

Ibn Ezra interprets: *'They have plumage like a bird' — [i.e. they fly about aimlessly,] גם נעו, they also wander.*

The Midrash relates the word to נצו, *blasphemed*, and comments: *'The Jews were not exiled until they blasphemed.'* [i.e. the verse thus means that all this came upon them (the death, the blood, the defile-

ment, the Destruction) because they blasphemed. Therefore they were forced to be wanderers.]

גם נעו — *And wander about, slipping in the blood (Rashi).*

Passers-by are thus cautioned that since the bloodied wanderers are blind, they may bump into bystanders and defile them. It is, therefore, incumbent on those who can see to be on guard against them (Alshich).

אמרו בגוים לא יוספו לגור — *The nations had said: 'They will dwell no longer.'* The nations predicted that the Jews will never again return to their land to dwell as before (Ibn Ezra; Akeidas Yitzchak) because [next verse] God is the One who exiled them (Alshich).

Other commentators translate: For the nations resolved — after seeing Israel's defilement — that they will not allow her to dwell [peacefully] in their lands, and they will compel her to wander about (Lechem Dim'ah).

16. פני ה' חלקם — *The anger [lit. 'face'] of HASHEM has divided them.* God's angry face divided them and

destroy the Temple,' Nebuchadnezzar said: 'He only wants to entrap me in order to do to me as He did to my ancestor [Sennacherib].'

So he sent his captain Nebuzaradan, to destroy Jerusalem. He was engaged in the task for three and a half years, daily encompassing Jerusalem, but was unable to subdue it. He was ready to return, frustrated, but God put an idea in his mind:

פרק ד כהנים לא נשאו זקנים לא חננו.
 יזיט עורינו תכלינה עינינו אל-עזרתנו הכל
 יזקנים ק בצפיתנו צפינו אל-גוי לא יושע.
 יח עורינו ק צדו צעדינו מלכת ברחבתינו קרב קצנו
 מלאו ימינו כי-בא קצנו.
 יט קלים היו רדפינו מנשרי שמים על-

dispersed them among the nations because they did not respect the face of the priest during their tranquility (*Rashi*).

The *Eiger Chumash* comments that this verse is a continuation of what the nations were saying (in the previous verse); [see commentary of *Alshich*, end of previous verse.]

[In this chapter, too, the verse beginning with פ, *pe* precedes the verse beginning with ע, *ayin*. See *comm.* to 2:16].

לא יוסיף להביטם — *caring for them no longer* [lit. 'He will no longer look at them'] i.e. to gather in their exiles (*Midrash Lekach Tov*).

Lechem Dim'ah translates: *God dispersed them throughout the nations so that He should not have to be concerned with them — because if they are fragmented they cannot unite and repent.*

Also, the *Lechem Dim'ah* continues, this verse might be interpreted as a prayer: May it be Your will that the Face of God which dispersed them should no longer glance at them with such anger, because this Face of His anger showed no regard for the priests nor favor for the elders — He

dispersed everyone without distinction.

פני כהנים לא נשאו — *They showed no regard for the priests.* [lit. 'the faces of the priests they did not lift up'] The end of the verse gives the reason that God dispersed the Jews and avoided looking after them: Because they showed no regard for the priests and elders, God showed no regard, as it were, for them (*Alshich*).

17. עורינו תכלינה עינינו . . . הכל — *Our eyes still strained in vain for our deliverance.* [The verse reproduces the state of mind that prevailed in the last days of the siege, when nearly everyone sustained the hope that outside help would arrive. From *Jeremiah* 34:21-22; 37:5-11 we know that the advance of the Egyptian army caused the Babylonians to retreat from Jerusalem, but as *Jeremiah* predicted, the relief was only temporary. The Egyptians never came to save them, and the Babylonians returned as *Jeremiah* predicted.]

As *Rashi* explains: 'When the tragedy befell us we were still hoping in vain for the Egyptian armies,

He began to measure the wall and it daily sank two and a half handbreadths until sank entirely to the ground.

In reference to that time is our verse written: 'The kings of the earth did not believe . . . that the enemy could enter the gates of Jerusalem.'

IV for them no longer; They showed no regard for the
17-19 priests nor favor for the elders.

¹⁷ Our eyes still strained in vain for our deliverance; in our expectations we watched for a nation that could not save.

¹⁸ They dogged our steps so we could not walk in our streets; our end drew near, our days are done, for our end has come.

¹⁹ Our pursuers were swifter than eagles in the

of whom it is written [Isaiah 30:7] 'For Egypt's [promise to] help is vain and to no purpose', for they promised to help, but they never came, as Jeremiah reports [Jeremiah 37:7] 'Behold, Pharaoh's army which is coming out to help you shall return to its land Egypt.'

The Midrash Lekach Tov explains the reason for the Egyptian army's return:

When the Egyptian army was sailing toward Israel, God floated skeletons on the surface of the water. 'These are the skeletons of our ancestors,' they said, 'who drowned on account of the Jews during the exodus. This is how they acted to our forefathers and yet we go to assist them?' At once they turned back.

18. These verses describe the miserable state of the Jews who remained in Judea under Chaldean rule (*Ibn Shu'ib*).

... צָדוּ אֶפְרַיִם — They dogged our steps so we could not walk in our streets. i.e. they ambushed us (*Rashi*), so that when a Jew went to

market they would pounce upon him screaming 'There goes a Jew!' (*Lekach Tov*).

קָרַב קִצְנוֹ — 'Our end drew near, i.e. God brought us close to our end, exterminating us from our land; מָלְאוּ יְמֵינוּ 'our days are done [lit. fulfilled] to die; כִּי-בָא קִצְנוֹ, 'for our end has come' — the Chaldeans came to destroy whatever was left of our lives (*Alshich*).

Midrash Lekach Tov comments: 'Our end drew near' — because the time for suffering had arrived and the measure was full.

[These three phrases — all indicating that they realized the end was at hand — can perhaps be best understood as a means of stressing the finality of the impending Destruction.]*

19. קָלִים הָיוּ רֹדְפֵינוּ מִנְּשָׁרֵי שָׁמַיִם — Our pursuers were swifter than eagles in the sky. Eagles are often used by Scripture to suggest swiftness [compare: יִרְאֶה בְּאֶשֶׁר יִרְדָּא — 'As the eagle swoops down' (*Deut. 28:49*); קָלוּ מִנְּשָׁרִים סוֹקִיו —

* [For a description of the final siege, I quote from *Jeremiah 52:6-28*.]

In the fourth month [*Tammuz*], on the ninth of the month the famine was severe in the city and there was no bread for the people of the land. The city was then breached and all the soldiers fled. . . by way of the plain. But the army of the Chaldeans pursued. . . *Zedekiah* and

פֶּרֶק ד' הָהָרִים דִּלְקָנוּ בַּמִּדְבָּר אָרְבוּ לָנוּ.
 כִּכֹּא ב רֹחַ אֲפִינוּ מְשִׁיחַ יְהוָה נִלְכַּד
 בְּשָׁחִיתוֹתֶם אֲשֶׁר אֲמָרְנוּ בְּצִלּוֹ נַחִיָּה
 בְּגוֹיִם.
 יִתִּיר י' כֹּא שִׁישִׁי וְשִׁמְחִי בַת־אֲדוֹם יוֹשֶׁבֶתִי בְּאֶרֶץ
 עֹץ גַּם־עֲלֶיךָ תַעֲבֹר־כּוֹס תִּשְׁכַּרִי
 וְתִתְעַרִי.

'His horses are swifter than eagles' (Jeremiah 4:13).]

The verse illustrates the diligence with which the enemy tirelessly, pursued — in the mountains, in the desert — those Jews who attempted to escape (*Ibn Yachaya*).

20. — *The breath of our nostrils, HASHEM's anointed.*

The *Talmud* (*Taanis* 22b); *Rashi*, *Alshich*, and most commentators hold that the reference here is to King יֹאשִׁיָּהוּ, Josiah, [who was killed by the Egyptian archers (*II Chronicles*, 35:23)] and this is the lament mentioned in *II Chronicles* 35:25 [see *Comm.* to 4:1].

Midrash Lekach Tov (as an alternative interpretation); and *Ibn Ezra* comment that the reference is to זְדַקְיָהוּ, Zedekiah, King of Judah, [who survived the initial siege and was captured desperately fleeing in the plains of Jericho by the Chaldeans. He was blinded and carried off to Babylon in chains (*II Kings* 25:5-7; see also excerpt from *Jeremiah* 52 cited above in *comm.* of verse 18].

[The expression רֹחַ אֲפִינוּ — 'The breath of our nostrils' occurs only

here, and poetically expresses the very essence of national hope and identity — its very survival and 'breath of life' — which focused on the monarch, God's anointed.]

— *In whose protection . . . we would live among the nations.* The thought was that had the king survived he might have been able to head a tributary state with him personally accountable to the King of Babylon, and that somehow they could peaceably 'co-exist among the nations.' With the king's capture, however, that hope, too, failed (*Midrash Lekach Tov*).

21. — *Rejoice and exult, O daughter of Edom.* These words are spoken sarcastically, as if to say: 'Rejoice while you can because you will not escape punishment for your sins' (*Midrash Lekach Tov*).

Ibn Ezra explains that Edom is referred to here because of its implacable hatred for Israel. They rejoiced at Jerusalem's downfall, as it is written (*Psalms* 137:7): *Remember HASHEM, against the sons of Edom the day of Jerusalem,*

overtook him in the plains of Jericho. . . The king of Babylon slew Zedekiah's sons before his eye. . . He put out Zedekiah's eyes and carried him off to Babylon where he put him in prison till the day of his death. . . And in the fifth month [Av], on the tenth of the month. . .

IV sky; they chased us in the mountains, ambushed us 20-21 in the desert.

²⁰ *The breath of our nostrils, HASHEM's anointed, was caught in their traps; He, under whose protection, we had thought, we would live among the nations.*

²¹ *Rejoice and exult, O daughter of Edom, who dwells in the land of Uz; to you, too, will the cup pass; you will be drunk and will vomit.*

they who said, 'destroy it, destroy it, unto its very foundation!' [see also Ovadiah 1:10-14 for a description of the malice which Edom demonstrated on the day of Jerusalem's disaster.]

According to Rashi and the Midrash this verse refers not to contemporary Edom but prophetically to the Romans [whom the Sages identify with Biblical Edom] who Jeremiah foresaw would destroy the Second Temple.

Alshich incorporates both interpretations. He suggests that *שִׂישִׁי*, rejoice, refers to Edom of the First, and *שִׂמְחִי*, exult, to the Edom [i.e. Rome] of the Second Temple.

יֹשֶׁבֶת בְּאֶרֶץ עֻז — who dwells in the land of Uz. [The Arameans land bordering upon Edom [see Jeremiah 25:20] and named after its early Edomite settler, Uz son of Seir (Gen. 36:28)].

וְגַם-עָלֶיךָ תִּשְׁכַּר-כּוֹס — To [lit. 'upon'] you, too, will the cup pass. — i.e. the cup of *פּוֹרְעָנוּת*, punishment (Rashi).

וְתִשְׁכַּר וְתִתְחַרֵּי — You will be drunk

and will vomit. [i.e. you will 'drink' so much from the 'cup of punishment and wrath' that you will get intoxicated from its abundance, and, like a drunken man, will vomit.]

Rav Yonasan Eyebeshetz, notes that the curse of vomiting is that as a result of 'vomiting' she will have room to 'drink' more from the cup of punishment.

The translation 'vomit' follows Rashi. Ibn J'nach [also Lechem Dim'ah] translates, *וְתִתְחַרֵּי* 'will become exposed' [from *עֲרֹנָה*, 'nakedness'] — i.e. like a drunken man, you will expose yourself.

[A striking parallel to this verse may be found in Habakuk 2:16 'Drink, also and be uncovered, the cup of HASHEM'S right hand shall be turned unto you'...]

[It is perhaps possible to relate *וְתִתְחַרֵּי* to the Edomite outcry against Jerusalem (Psalms 137:7: *עָרוֹ עָרוֹ* 'destroy it! destroy it!'. 'Just as you Edomites called excessively for Jerusalem's destruction, so will you drink excessively from the 'cup of destruction' and be destroyed']

Nevuzaradan, captain of the guard. . . came to Jerusalem and burned the House of HASHEM and broke down the walls of Jerusalem, and carried into exile. . . the rest of the multitude. . . Thus Judah was exiled out of its own land.

פרק ד כב תַּם-עֲוֹנֶךָ בַּת-צִיּוֹן לֹא יוֹסִיף לְהַגְלוֹתְךָ
כב פָּקֶד עֲוֹנֶךָ בַּת-אֲדוֹם גְּלָה עַל-חַטָּאתֶיךָ.

פרק ה א זְכֹר יְהוָה מִה־הָיָה לָנוּ הַבֵּיט וּרְאֵה אֶת-
חַרְפֹּתֵינוּ. א-ב
ג נַחֲלֹתֵנוּ נִהְפָּכָה לְזָרִים בְּתֵינוּ לְנֹכְרִים. יְהִיטָה ק'

22. תַּם-עֲוֹנֶךָ בַּת-צִיּוֹן — *Your iniquity is expiated, O daughter of Zion.* i.e. you have been punished for all your sins (*Rashi*).

You have been punished in one blow for the accumulation of all your iniquity (*Alshich*).

The *Midrash* notes that [the miseries and calamities related in] the Book of *Eichah* were better for Israel than the forty years during which Jeremiah exhorted and prophesied. Because of the Destruction of the Temple, all Israel's sins were expiated that very day.

לֹא יוֹסִיף לְהַגְלוֹתְךָ — *He will not exile you again* — beyond the Edomite [Roman, i.e. current exile] (*Rashi*).

[*Rashi* thus understands the subject 'He' as referring to God.]

Ibn Ezra suggests that the subject is 'your iniquity' [i.e. 'your iniquity will never again cause you to be exiled']

פָּקֶד עֲוֹנֶךָ בַּת-אֲדוֹם — *He remembers* [lit. *remembered*] *your iniquity, daughter of Edom.*

Or, according to *Ibn Ezra* Your

iniquities themselves, O daughter of Edom, evoke remembrance [i.e. will cause your punishment.]

The word 'פָּקֶד, remember, when referring to the Divine rule — indicates that God decrees what is appropriate or deserved' (*S.R. Hirsch* on *Exodus* 20:5).

[The 'prophetic past tense' is used; as if the action had already taken place.]

גְּלָה עַל-חַטָּאתֶיךָ — *He will uncover* [lit. 'has uncovered'] *your sins*, [i.e. 'He will punish you'; (the opposite — God's 'covering' of sins — would mean to withhold punishment)]

According to *Midrash Lekach Tov*, 'He remembered your iniquity' refers to the Edomites present at the First Destruction; 'He has uncovered your sins' refers to the Edomites [Romans] present at the Second Destruction.

[The verse thus closes this chapter with the prophetic consolation that the worst of God's wrath upon the Jews has passed, and that now it is time for Edom's day of Judgment.]

V

[Chapter Five is composed of 22 verses like chapters 1, 2 and 4 — it

differs from the previous four chapters in that it is not

²² Your iniquity is expiated, O daughter of Zion,
He will not exile you again; He remembers your iniquity daughter of Edom, He will uncover your sins.

Remember, HASHEM, what has befallen us; look
and see our disgrace.

² Our inheritance has been turned over to
strangers, our houses to foreigners.

alphabetically arranged.]

1. זָכַר ה' מִהֲיָהָ לָנוּ — Remember, HASHEM, what has befallen us. [lit. 'what has been to us'] i.e. 'Remember the sufferings we endured before the Destruction, as well as our present disgraceful condition (Ibn Ezra).

Israel spoke before the Holy One, blessed be He: 'We are subject to forgetfulness, but You are not. Since there is no forgetfulness before You, please remember. . . ' (Midrash).

The Alshich interprets this as alluding not to former suffering, but to former glory (see below).

הִבִּיט וּרְאָה אֶת־חֲרָפָתָנוּ — Look and see our disgrace. 'Remember', God, those who died at the hands of our enemies, and 'Look and see' the disgrace which we survivors suffer (Lechem Dim'ah).

The Alshich explains that the suffering of a poor man who has never seen wealth cannot be compared with the greater suffering of a wealthy man who has been reduced to pauperdom — who is now publicly disgraced at having to beg for his very sustenance. Thus the exiles who were thrust from the heights of glory to the lowest conditions of

servility, commiserated over their fate and lamented: זָכַר ה' מִהֲיָהָ לָנוּ Remember, HASHEM, what we have been — during our time of royalty. And as You remember our former grandeur, הִבִּיטָהּ, look, at our present condition in exile, וּרְאָה אֶת חֲרָפָתָנוּ, see our disgrace now, compared with our former glory.

2. נַחֲלָתָנוּ נִהְפָּכָה לְזָרִים — Our inheritance has been turned over to strangers. According to the Midrash, נַחֲלָתָנוּ, our 'inheritance' refers to the Temple. The Midrash continues and comments: Asaph came and said: It is not our inheritance, it is not our holy and our beautiful house — the enemy entered into Yours, as it is written מִזְמוֹר לְאַסָּף אֱלֹהִים בָּאוּ גוֹיִם בְּנַחֲלָתְךָ טָמְאוּ אֶת הַיֵּבֶל קִדְּשְׁךָ Asaph: God! The heathens have come into Your Inheritance; they have defiled Your Holy Temple' (Psalms 79:1.)

Ibn Ezra translates: 'Our fields and vineyards were transferred to the aliens in our land.'

Lechem Dim'ah notes the use of נִהְפָּכָה, 'overturned' instead of 'transferred' or 'given' and explains that when Eretz Yisrael is in the hands of heathens it is like a city overturned.

פֶּרֶק ה' יתומים הִיָּינוּ אֵין אָב אֲמֵתִינוּ בְּאֶלְמָנוֹת.
 גִּיה- מִיָּמֵינוּ בְּכֶסֶף שְׁתִּינוּ עֲצִינוּ בְּמַחִיר יָבֹאוּ.
 יִאִין ק' ה' עַל צָוָארֵנוּ נִרְדָּפְנוּ יִגְעֵנוּ לֹא הוֹנַח לָנוּ.
 יִלֵּא ק'

Our houses to foreigners. — *Our houses to foreigners.*

The *Alshich* differentiates between strangers [i.e. aliens] and foreigners. When the Jews were freed from Egyptian bondage and returned to Eretz Yisrael as aliens, the inheritance [the Land] was turned over from the native Canaanites to us, who were strangers at the time; but now even our houses were transferred, not simply to 'strangers' but to 'foreigners' — who had absolutely no claim whatsoever to the Land.

3. יתומים הִיָּינוּ וְאֵין אָב — *We have become orphans and fatherless* [lit. 'and there is no father']. Among the heathens, we were as miserable as orphans. 'Fatherless' is mentioned because, customarily, the father's family assists orphans (*Ibn Ezra*).

'Fatherless' refers to our relationship with God who is called 'our Father'— i.e. God has, in a sense, removed Himself from us, leaving us 'fatherless' (*Alshich*).

Lechem Dim'ah [who also interprets 'father' as 'God'] notes that the בְּתִיב, written text, has אֵין אָב, 'there is no father' without the connecting prefix וְ 'and'. It is therefore intended to be understood as a separate clause: The ravages of war made us 'become orphans' from our natural father; in addition to that calamity, אֵין אָב, there is no father, because God has 'hidden Himself' so to speak, from us. But this verse is not to be understood as suggesting that God is no longer the Father of Israel, חַי, but that 'He is

not there' in the sense that He maintains a distance instead of being available and paternal to His children.

The *Midrash* comments: *Rav Berachiah* said in the name of *Rav Levi*, The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Israel: 'You weep and say before Me, "We have become orphans and fatherless." I swear by your lives that the deliverer whom I will raise up from among you in Media [i.e. Esther] will likewise be fatherless and motherless.' That is what is written [*Esther 2:7*]: 'And he had reared Hadassah, that is, Esther, his uncle's daughter, since she had neither father nor mother.' [Nevertheless miracles were wrought for her. God thus consoled the Jews not to feel hopeless in their orphaned state (*Torah Temimah*).]

אֲמֵתִינוּ בְּאֶלְמָנוֹת — *Our mothers are like widows.*

The plural אֲמֵתִינוּ, our mothers, suggests two mothers: biological; and the *Shechinah* which is the 'Mother' of her children, כְּנֶסֶת, יִשְׂרָאֵל, the Congregation of Israel. Both are only likened to widows, but are not real widows. The *Shechinah* cannot be considered truly widowed for He is only in temporary 'hiding' and will yet return. The biological mother is also not truly widowed, but she is more unfortunate than a widow — she is an *Agunah*. Her husband has been murdered by the enemy without surviving witnesses to declare her free to remarry. This might also be another interpretation of אֵין אָב,

3-5 ³ We have become orphans, fatherless; our mothers are like widows.

⁴ We pay money to drink our own water, obtain our wood at a price.

⁵ Upon our necks we are pursued; we toil, but nothing is left us.

there is no father, i.e. since our mothers are *Agunahs*, not free to remarry, there is no hope of ever again having a father (*Lechem Dim'ah*).

[Compare also *Commentary*, end of 1:1 s.v. הִיְתָה בְּאֵלְמָנָה]

4. מִיְמִינוּ בְּכֶסֶף שָׁתִינוּ — We pay money to drink our own water. [lit. 'our water for silver we drank'] Because, due to the enemy, they were afraid to fetch it from the river. Instead they were forced to purchase it at a high price from the enemy (*Rashi*) who had taken possession of their wells (*Alshich*).

Even the wells and trees which had been common property were sold at exorbitant prices due to the siege (*Ibn Ezra*).

Midrash Lekach Tov understands 'water' as a metaphorical reference to Torah [as in the Talmudic dictum: אין מים אלא תורה, 'water (in certain contexts) refers to nothing but Torah' (*Bava Kamma* 17a)]. He translates: 'we pay money to learn our Torah' — i.e. they didn't even allow us to learn our Torah without bribing them.

עָצִינוּ בְּמַחִיר יָבֹאוּ — Obtain our wood for a price. [lit. 'our wood would come for a price']. They took possession of our own forests, and made us pay for our own wood (*Midrash*).

Lechem Dim'ah connects this verse with the next. He interprets

this verse as referring to the affluent past, and verse 5 as referring to the current plight:

מִיְמִינוּ בְּכֶסֶף שָׁתִינוּ, we used to drink our water in silver [goblets]; we used to sit leisurely at home and עָצִינוּ, our lumber, would be hewn by others בְּמַחִיר יָבֹאוּ, who, for a price, labored and delivered it to us. But now [verse 5] under the severe oppression, נִגְעָנוּ, we ourselves toil (to fetch our water and lumber) וְלֹא הוֹנַחֲלֵנוּ, the oppressor does not allow us to keep the fruit of our efforts; he steals our water and lumber from right under us. (The latter part agrees with *Ibn Ezra* on verse 5; see below).

5. עַל צְנַאֲרֵנוּ נִרְדָּפְנוּ — Upon our necks we are pursued. i.e. with the burden of hard toil (*Rashi*).

Ibn Ezra explains: Even when we carried back our water and lumber על צְנַאֲרֵנוּ on our necks, we were pursued by our enemy לֹא הוֹנַחֲלֵנוּ, who did not allow us to keep what we brought (also *Alshich*).

Many commentators: (*Ibn Yachya*; *Rav Almosnino*; *Lechem Dim'ah*; *Torah T'mimah*) note that in another context the *Talmud* [*Megillah* 16b] takes the word 'neck' to allude to the Temple. Thus, the verse 'And [Joseph] fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck' [*Gen.* 45:14], is understood to mean that he cried over the destruction of the Temples, both of which were in the territory of Benjamin. Here, too,

פֶּרֶק ה' **ו' מִצְרַיִם נָתַנוּ יָד אֲשׁוּר לְשָׁבַע לָחֶם.**
יז' אֲבֹתֵינוּ הָטְאוּ אֵינָם אֶנְחָנוּ עֲוֹנֵיהֶם
סָבְלוּנוּ. יֵאֵינָם ק'
 יִנְאֻחֵנוּ ק'

they suggest that the word **צָנַא**, neck, alludes to the Temple. In the words of *Midrash: Upon our necks we are pursued*: Because we acted treacherously to our 'neck' [i.e. the Temple] we are pursued.

וְלֹא הוּנַח לָנוּ — *But nothing is left us.*

They acquired everything we had by imposing taxes and levies (*Rashi*).

The *Midrash* translates **וְלֹא הוּנַח** לָנוּ 'and we were given no rest': *

6. מִצְרַיִם נָתַנוּ יָד — *We stretched a hand out to Egypt.* For help, as a fallen person stretches out his hand for assistance to someone nearby (*Rashi*).

The reference is: 'We made a pact with Egypt' (*Ibn Ezra*).

אֲשׁוּר לְשָׁבַע לָחֶם — *And to Assyria to be satisfied with bread.* [The connective 'and' is not in the Hebrew, but the phrase is so connected by *Rashi*]: 'And to Assyria, that they should satisfy us with their bread' (*Rashi*).

The *Midrash* relates that the Jews had traded their oil with Egypt for foodstuff which they then sent to Assyria in the hope that, if the enemy were to advance, Egypt and Assyria would come to their assistance. Ultimately the pact was fruitless — when the attack came, her 'allies' ignored her [see also

4:17]. The futility of this ill-fated arrangement is now lamented by the prophet (*Torah Temimah*).

Ibn Yachya translates the verse as two separate clauses: 'Usually the downtrodden will try to regain his pride in front of his enemies. We were reduced to such straits, however, that we were forced to seek a pact with Egypt; to seek sustenance from Assyria.'

7. אֲבֹתֵינוּ הָטְאוּ וְאֵינָם — *Our fathers have sinned and are no more, and we have suffered for their iniquities.* Several interpretations are given for this important verse. A comprehensive selection follows:.

Ibn Ezra comments that our misfortune is the result of our sins which intermingled with the sins of our ancestors for which they were not punished according to the doctrine of **פֶּקַד עֲוֹן אָבֹת עַל-בְּנֵיהֶם** [לְשֹׁנָאִי], 'punishing the iniquity of the fathers upon the children . . . [of those that hate Me] (*Exodus 20:5*). [*Ramban*, quoting the *Talmud* (*Sanhedrin 27b*), explains that God punishes children for the sins of the fathers only if the children persist in committing those sins.]

The 'Ari' ז"ל offers an interpretation to harmonize the apparent contradiction between the Biblical verse (*Exodus 20:5*) 'punishing the iniquity of the fathers upon the children' and *Ezekiel's* **אִישׁ בְּחַטָּאוֹ**

* *Nebuchadnezzar, the accursed, commanded Nebuzaradan: 'The God of this people accepts the penitent. When you conquer them, therefore, do not allow them [to stop and rest long enough] to pray, lest they repent and their God have pity on them, and I will go down in defeat.' When Nebuzaradan conquered them, if one of them stopped and prayed, he seized*

V ⁶ We stretched out a hand to Egypt, and to Assyria
6-7 to be satisfied with bread.

⁷ Our fathers have sinned and are no more, and we
have suffered for their iniquities.

נָמוּת, *Each man will die for his own sin*. He points out — in addition to the Talmudic explanation above that the verse in *Exodus* applies only when the children persist in their fathers' ways—that there is also a distinction between עֲוֹן, *iniquity*, and חַטָּא, *sin*. 'Iniquity' [referring to the verse in *Exodus*] applies to מְזִיד, *willful transgressions*, for which, according to the Torah, children share the guilt. Ezekiel, however, referred to חַטָּא, *unintentional transgressions* for which children are not punished. Thus, the 'Ari' ז"ל explains our verse [as does *Ibn Yachya*, *Lechem Dim'ah*]: 'Our fathers חָטְאוּ *sinned unintentionally*, ואֵינָם *and they are not*— i.e. we are not being held accountable for them; אָנַחְנוּ עֲוֹנוֹתֵיהֶם *suffered for their intentional transgressions* — for those we do suffer.

[It must be stressed that the Jews were *not* suggesting that their suffering was *wholly* the result of their fathers' sins. They admitted complicity, too, as evidenced by the outcry in verse 16: אֹוִיָּנָא לָנוּ כִּי חָטְאוּנוּ, 'woe to us, for *we* have sinned.' Rather, as suggested by *Ibn Ezra* (above), they acknowledged their share of the iniquity. Added together with the sins of their ancestors, the cumulative guilt was the cause of their present

predicament.]

Lechem Dim'ah explains that it would be more appropriate for the fathers to receive their own punishment. But since אֵינָם, *they are no more*, it is only just their children — who according to *halachah* are enjoined to say after a father's death; אֲנִי כַפֶּרֶת מִשְׁכָּבוֹ, 'I am the atonement for his repose' — should accept responsibility. As the *Alshich* notes, no atonement is necessary for חַטָּאִים, the unintentional sins of parents, because death atones 'for them. For עֲוֹנוֹת, *intentional transgressions*, however, death does not suffice — suffering is a required part of the atonement. Children, therefore, should accept the obligation to atone for the sins of their parents.

Ibn Shuib interprets this verse — not as referring specifically to the doctrine of Divine Punishment — but as giving the cause of the futility of the alliance with Egypt and Assyria alluded to previously. i.e. We are suffering for what the Egyptians believed to be our fathers' 'sins' against their ancestors, i.e. the drowning of the Egyptians in the Red Sea, and the death of Sennacherib with his Assyrian army. [See also *Midrash Lekach Tov* quoted in *Comm.* to 4:17.]

According to *Midrash Lekach*

him and tore him limb from limb and cast the dismembered body before the people making them journey with no rest. . .

When they reached the Euphrates he ordered his soldiers to let them rest 'because from here [i.e. outside Eretz Yisrael] their God will not turn toward them' (*Midrash*).

פֶּרֶק הַ ח עֲבָדִים מְשֻׁלוֹ כָּנוּ פֶּרֶק אֵין מִיָּדָם.
 חֲיֵיא ט בְּנַפְשָׁנוּ נָבִיא לַחֲמָנוּ מִפְּנֵי חֶרֶב הַמִּדְבָּר.
 י עוֹרְנוּ בְּתַנּוּר נִכְמְרוּ מִפְּנֵי זִלְעָפוֹת רָעָב.
 יא נָשִׁים בְּצִיּוֹן עָנוּ בְּתֵלֶת בְּעָרֵי יְהוּדָה.

Tov: 'Our fathers indulged in needless weeping [on the ninth of Av, during the incident of the Spies (see *Comm.* to 1:2, and *Overview*)]. We suffer for their iniquity by the eternal weeping which was imposed on us throughout the ages.'

Rav Yisrael Salanter explained this verse morally: Fathers who do not train their children in the ways of Torah are considered חֲסִיאִים, sinners, even when 'they are no more' i.e. after their deaths. Because their children continue the sinful ways for which their fathers are responsible, they, the children 'suffer for their father's iniquities', suffering for which the parents bear the onus.

8. עֲבָדִים מְשֻׁלוֹ כָּנוּ — *Slaves ruled over us . . .* — The reference is to Edom, who before the Babylonian conquest had been paying tribute to Judah. It now became part of the occupying force (*Ibn Ezra*).

. . . As King Solomon, wisely observed (*Proverbs* 30:21), this is one 'of three things for which the earth trembles: When a slave rules' (*Kiflayim l'Sushiyah*).

According to various views in the *Midrash*, this refers to the Egyptians, or to the 'four Kingdoms' [Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome] — 'with none to rescue us from their hand': 'had it not been for the Holy One, blessed be He.'

Alshich comments that these 'rulers' were slaves who were themselves still subject to the rule of their masters — therefore אֵין פֶּרֶק

מִיָּדָם, there was none to rescue us from them, because they could not free us except with the consent of their own masters.

9. בְּנַפְשָׁנוּ נָבִיא לַחֲמָנוּ — *In mortal danger* [lit. 'with our soul'] we bring our bread. In bringing in our crops from the field we constantly exposed ourselves to the dangers of being slain by raiders from the wilderness (*Rashi*; *Ibn Ezra*).

Lechem Dim'ah comments that the hunger was so severe and the peril so great that בְּנַפְשָׁנוּ — only for that small amount which was critically needed to sustain our souls, נָבִיא לַחֲמָנוּ, did we venture to risk our lives to go out and fetch our bread, for fear of the 'sword of the wilderness'.

Rabban Shimon ben Gamaliel, [*Tanna* who witnessed the Destruction of the Second Temple] said: Our ancestors experienced only part of what has been inflicted upon us [several verses are quoted, including our verse]; and they grew impatient; we who have been surrounded by it for so many years are more justified than they in becoming impatient (*Midrash Shir haShirim* 3:3).

— מִפְּנֵי חֶרֶב הַמִּדְבָּר — *Because of the sword of the wilderness.* Because of those with sword in hand, who wait to ambush us in the desert (*Alshich*).

The *Midrash Lekach Tov* wryly observes: 'Even in our times, a Jew

V *Slaves ruled us, there is no rescuer from their
8-11 hands.

9 In mortal danger we bring our bread, because of
the sword of the wilderness.

10 Our skin was scorched like an oven, with the
fever of famine.

11 They ravaged women in Zion; maidens in the
towns of Judah.

who traverses out to transact his
business risks being exposed to the
'sword' of the nations.'

10. עורנו כתנור נִכְמְרוּ — Our skin
was scorched like an oven. Ibn Ezra
adds, as a bridge between verses 9
and 10: "Had we not 'risked our
lives to get bread' we would have
died" because 'Our skin was
scorched like an oven with the fever
of famine.'

מִפְּנֵי וְלַעֲפֹת רָעָב — With [lit.
'because of'] the 'fever' of famine.

11. נָשִׁים ... בְּחֵלַת בְּצִיר יְהוּדָה —
They ravaged women in Zion;
maidens in the town of Judah. As if
the sufferings of famine were not
punishment enough, the slaves
[verse 8] ravaged our wives (Ibn
Ezra).

The greater the sanctity of the
place, the more heinous their sins.
In Judah, the enemy limited himself

to ravaging בְּחֵלַת unmarried
maidens, in the higher sanctity of
Zion, the environs of Jerusalem and
the Temple, he was brazen and
defiant enough toward God to show
his contempt and ravage נָשִׁים mar-
ried women (Kiflayim L'Soshiyah).

Lechem Dim'ah explains that
when the Babylonian soldiers
marched on Zion, they first passed
through the towns of Judah. Not
yet being sure of their own
strength, they limited their ravages
to unmarried maidens. But by the
time they reached Jerusalem, the
tide of war was going with them
and they were fully confident of
victory. Then they stopped at
nothing, even ravaging married
women.*

The Targum translates: 'Married
women in Zion' were ravaged by
Arameans [Edomites; Ibn Yachya
and Lechem Dim'ah version of
Targum reads 'Romans']; 'maidens
in the towns of Judah' by Chal-
deans (Babylonians).

* Nebuzaradan commanded his troops: 'The God of this people hates lewdness, so take care
not to touch any married women.'

When the unmarried women heard this they would go to a man and say: 'We will eat our
own food and clothe ourselves at our own expense, only let your name be attached us'; that is
what is written (Isaiah 4:1): 'And seven women shall take hold of one man in that day and
say: We will eat our own bread and wear our own clothes; only let us be called by your name.'

Only three maidens were indifferent and did not do this, and they were ravished
(Midrash).

פָּרָק ה' יב שָׂרִים בְּיָדָם נָתְלוּ פָּנֵי זְקֵנִים לֹא נִהְדָּרוּ.
יב־טו יג בַּחֲוֵרִים טָחוֹן נָשְׂאוּ וְנִעְרִים בָּעֵץ בָּשְׁלוּ.
יד זְקֵנִים מִשְׁעָר שָׁכְתוּ בַּחֲוֵרִים מִנְּגִינָתָם.
טו שָׁבַת מַשׁוּשׁ לִבָּנוּ נִהְפָּךְ לְאַבֵּל מַחֻלָּנוּ.
טז נִפְלְאָה עֲטֻרַת רֹאשֵׁנוּ אִוִּי־נָא לָנוּ כִּי

12. שָׂרִים בְּיָדָם נָתְלוּ — Officers were hanged by their hand. Several interpretations of 'by their hand' are possible:

'We haven't even officers to save our women, for even the officers are being hanged by their arms' [i.e. tortured and exposed to public disgrace]; another interpretation: 'at the hands of the slaves' mentioned in verse 8 (Ibn Ezra).

Alshich suggests they hanged themselves by their own hand — rather than submit to the tortures to which the enemy would subject them as defeated officers.

פָּנֵי זְקֵנִים לֹא נִהְדָּרוּ — Elders were shown no respect [lit. 'the faces of the elders were not honored'].

When a governor entered a city, he took its best men and hanged them. The elders would go to him and try to dissuade him from doing so, but he refused to listen to them. Therefore it is said, officers were hanged by their hand, elders were shown no respect (Midrash).

According to Alshich: These officers were still young men, 'they did not yet have the honored faces of old men', and (elaborates Rav Yonasan Eyebescheutz) in taking their own lives they ignored the warnings of the old men.

Lechem Dim'ah comments that the meaning of 'elders were shown no respect' is that the elders, too, were hanged and punished with the

same ferocity as the young officers.

Rav Almoshino suggests that 'officers were now hanged' in punishment for 'not having — in the past — honored their elders.'

13. בַּחֲוֵרִים טָחוֹן נָשְׂאוּ — Young men drag the millstone. The enemy placed millstones on the shoulders of the young men to torture them and drain their strength (Rashi).

The Midrash notes that there were no mills in Babylon [because there were no large stones in the country which could be used for grinding]. So when Nebuchadnezzar prevailed against Eretz Yisrael, he made the inhabitants carry millstones and bring them down to Babylon.

Ibn Ezra suggests that the verse may mean that the young men were forced to grind corn, a torturous task that required great strength [note, too, that when Samson was captured, he was made to 'grind in the prison' (Judges 16:21; see commentaries there).] And the youths stumbled under the strain of the milling.

וְנִעְרִים בָּעֵץ בָּשְׁלוּ—And youths stumble under [lit. 'in' or 'with'] the wood. Rav Yehoshua ben Levi said: Three hundred children were found hung by the enemy on one branch (Midrash).

According to Alshich: The children grew so weak that they

V ¹² Leaders were hanged by their hand, elders were
12-16 shown no respect.

¹³ Young men drag the millstone, and youths
stumble under the wood.

¹⁴ The elders are gone from the gate, the young
men from their music.

¹⁵ Gone is the joy of our hearts, our dancing has
turned into mourning.

¹⁶ The crown of our head has fallen; woe to us, for

would stumble over a branch lying
on the road.

Rav Almosnino suggests, too,
that they grew so weak, the youths
stumbled 'with the wood' i.e. even
with the support of a walking-stick
they were unable to stand on their
feet and get about.

14. זָקֵנִים... בַּחֲוֹרִים מִנְּגִינָתָם — *The
elders are gone* [lit. 'ceased'] *from
the gate; the young men (ceased)
from their songs.* [It had been the
custom for elders to station
themselves at the gates (see Ruth
4:1; Esther 2:21); Now the gates lie
desolate (see above 1:4).]

'Elders', here refers to the wise
men, as the *Talmud* states: בִּי אֵין
זָקֵן אֶלָּא מִי שֶׁקָּנָה חִכְמָה — For זָקֵן,
'elder' means only one who has ac-
quired wisdom' [*Kiddushin* 32b].
They who have departed from the
'gates of Halachah.' Similarly,
'young men' refers to the young
students who would study Mishnah
by heart, and put the words to a
melody as an aid to memorization.
They, too, sang no longer (*Lechem
Dim'ah*).

In verses 11-14, we have a
description of how the enemy at-
tacked every segment of the pop-
ulation in every social strata: mar-
ried women and maidens; officers

and elders; young men and
children (*Rav Almosnino*).

15-16. שֶׁבֶת מְשׁוֹשׁ לִבֵּנוּ — *Gone*
[lit. 'ceased'] *is the joy of our heart.*
Because the sacrifices have ceased
(*Ibn Ezra*).

When the 'elders ceased from the
gate, and the young men ceased
from their songs' we experienced an
emotional void in our inner being,
with the departure of 'the joy of our
heart.' Also, our outward joy — ex-
pressed as 'our dancing' — turned to
public mourning (*Kiflayim*
I'Sushiyah).

When the Sanhedrin ceased to
function, notes the *Midrash*, songs
ceased from the places of feasting.
Now, however, [the songs and the
places of feasting themselves], no
longer exist, 'gone is the joy of our
hearts'.

מְחֹלְלוֹ — *Our dancing* i.e. our
dancers and singers (*Ibn Ezra*).

And all this lack of joy is because
נָפְלָה עֲטֶרֶת רִאשֵׁנוּ, *the crown of our
head*, i.e. the Holy Temple, *has fal-
len* (*Alshich; Ibn Ezra*).

Rav Almosnino comments that
'the crown of our head' refers to the
Shechinah (Divine Presence). He
translates the verse thus: 'The
Shechinah has departed from us

יִיכָן י' עַל־זֶה הָיָה דָּוָה לִפְנֵינוּ עַל־אֵלֶּה חֲשָׁבוּ
עֵינֵינוּ.

יח עַל הַר־צִיּוֹן שְׁשָׁמָם שׁוֹעָלִים הִלְכוּ־בָּו.

יט אֲתָה יְהוָה לְעוֹלָם תֵּשֵׁב בְּסֶאֱף לְדוֹר
וְדוֹר.

כ לָמָּה לִנְצַח תִּשְׁכַּחֲנוּ תַעֲזֹבֵנוּ לְאָרֶץ
יָמִים.

because of our sins — *woe to us that we have sinned!*'

אוי־נָא לָנוּ בִּי חֲטָאוֹנוּ — *Woe to us for we have sinned.* Now that the Temple is destroyed, how will we atone for our sins? Previously, a sinner would offer a sacrifice to atone for his sins. Now there is no longer a Temple. Woe to us! (*Lechem Dim'ah*).

[This is an obvious confession, a recognition that everything that has befallen them is the result — and just reward — for their sinful ways (see *comm.* to verse 7).]

17.~18. עַל־זֶה הָיָה דָּוָה לִפְנֵינוּ — *For this our heart was faint, [or 'sick']* etc. For what is described in the next verse (the desolation of Mount Zion with foxes prowling it). (*Rashi*)

Alshich interprets the first half of this verse as referring to remorse over her sins which were the cause of the Destruction; the second half of the verse to the desolation of Mt. Zion.

The *Midrash* comments: Just as a

woman who separates from her husband for a few days because of impurity is called *נָכָה*, *sick* [*Leviticus 15:33*] how much more should *we* be called *נָכָה*, *sick*, for being separated from the 'house of our life' the Temple, for these many years?

עַל־אֵלֶּה חֲשָׁבוּ עֵינֵינוּ — *For these our eyes dimmed* [lit. 'blackened'] from excessive weeping (*Ibn Ezra*).

For none of our other catastrophes and suffering did our hearts grow so faint or did we weep so much, as for 'Mt. Zion which lies desolate, foxes prowled over it' (*Rav Yosef Kara; Palgei Mayim*).

עַל הַר־צִיּוֹן שְׁשָׁמָם... — *For Mount Zion which lies desolate, foxes prowled over it.* Its desolation is so utter, that foxes, which usually dwell in ruins, prowl freely and undisturbed over it (*Alshich; Ibn Ezra*).

[In this context Mount Zion is used poetically in place of Mount Moriah — the actual site of the Temple].*

* The *Talmud* (*Makkos 24b*) and *Midrash* relate an incident which took place after the Destruction of the Second Temple:

Rabban Gamliel, Rabbi Eleazar ben Azariah, Rabbi Yehoshua and Rabbi Akiva were

V we have sinned.

17-20 ¹⁷ For this our heart was faint, for these our eyes dimmed:

¹⁸ for Mount Zion which lies desolate, foxes prowled over it.

¹⁹ Yet You, HASHEM, are enthroned forever, Your throne is ageless.

²⁰ Why do You ignore us eternally, forsake us for so long?

19. 20. אתה ה' לעולם תשב — Yet You, HASHEM, are enthroned forever. Although the manifestation of Your Kingship on earth is in ruins, nevertheless, Your dominion will never cease. You are enthroned forever. So if Your incorporeality is undiminished, and our sins only affect material manifestations of Your holiness, *why do You ignore us eternally?* (Alshich)

[It follows that since HASHEM'S Kingship is ageless, His throne itself will ultimately be restored]: 'Is there enthronement without a throne; a King without a consort?' [Jerusalem is the 'throne'; Israel the 'consort' (Torah Temimah)] (Midrash). ..

למה לנצח תשכחנו — Why do You ignore [lit. 'forget'] us eternally? You have sworn to us by Your Own Self! Just as You are eternal so is Your oath [to our forefathers] eternal! (Rashi).

תעזבנו לארך ימים — [why do you] forsake us for so long [lit. 'for the length of days']? i.e. for the duration of our long present exile (Alshich).

Since You and Your Kingship are eternal, it seems proper that Your Temple should also be eternal. We cannot comprehend, therefore why You ignore and forsake us for such a long time (Kiflayim l'Soshiyah).

travelling to Jerusalem, and as they approached Mount Scopus, they saw a fox emerge from [the ruins of] the Holy of Holies. They all wept at the sight, but Rabbi Akiva laughed.

'Why are you merry?' they asked him.

'Why do you weep?' he responded.

'Shouldn't we weep,' they answered, 'when from such a holy place concerning which the Torah commanded (Numbers 1:51) וְהָזָר הַקָּרֵב יוֹמָא "and the stranger that comes near shall die" a fox emerges — in fulfillment of the verse "Mount Zion which lies desolate, foxes prowled over it"?'

'For that reason I am merry!' Rabbi Akiva answered. Just as we have just seen the fulfillment of the prophecy of Uriah, 'one faithful witness': "Zion shall be plowed as a field and Jerusalem shall become heaps" (Jeremiah 26:18), in the future we can look forward to the fulfillment of the prophecy of another (Isaiah 8:2) "faithful witness", Zechariah: "Old men and old women shall yet dwell in the streets of Jerusalem, and every man with his staff in hand for very age. And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets" (Zechariah 8:4). Just as Uriah's prophecy was fulfilled, so will Zechariah's.'

They answered him: 'Akiva, you have comforted us! Akiva you have comforted us!'

פֶּרֶק ה' כ"א הַשִּׁיבֵנוּ יְהוָה | אֵלֶיךָ וְנִשׁוּבָה חֲדָשׁ יָמֵינוּ
כֹּאֲכֵב בְּקֶדֶם.

וְנִשׁוּבָה ק' כב בִּי אִם־מָאֵס מֵאֲסָתָנוּ קִצְפָּת עָלֵינוּ עַד־
מָאֵד.

הַשִּׁיבֵנוּ יְהוָה אֵלֶיךָ וְנִשׁוּבָה חֲדָשׁ יָמֵינוּ כֶּקֶדֶם.

21. *Bring us back to You, HASHEM and we shall return [or 'repent']*. Israel addresses God: 'All we ask is for some Divine assistance. If You initiate the action, and draw us near to You, then we will repent our sins and return to You wholeheartedly' (*Lechem Dim'ah*).

The Midrash relates that there is a constant dispute, so to speak, between HASHEM and Israel. God insists: *שובו אלי ואשובה אליכם* '[first] return to Me and [then] I will return to you' (*Malachi* 3:7); and Israel answers: *השיבנו ה' אליך* '[First] bring us back to You and [then] we shall return.' Neither side gives in and thus the dispute, as to who will take the initiative, continues . . .

. . . The Maggid of Kozhnitz explains homiletically that this is why we face the Master of the Universe and say: *למה לנצח תשכחנו* *why for the sake of victory, do You forget us, Your children? Whom are you defeating — Your foolish stubborn children? Concede, O Merciful God, this one time! השיבנו ה' אליך* *Bring us back to You, HASHEM, and we shall return!*'

Ibn Ezra translates *השיבנו* *bring us back*, in the physical sense: 'Bring us back to the city of the Dwelling Place of Your name, [Jerusalem], and we will resume serving You as before.'

Renew our days as of old. As it is written (*Malachi* 3:4), 'Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant to HASHEM *בימי עולם קדמוניות*, *as in the days of old, ובשנים קדמוניות*, and *as in ancient years*' (*Midrash*) — Renew our days as You did when You took us out of Egypt (*Ibn Shu'ib*).

Lechem Dim'ah explains esoterically that this is a request that God inhibit the *יצר הרע*, *Evil Inclination* and that He return us to the period before there was a *יצר הרע*, *Evil Inclination*, so that our repentance will be pure and untainted.

22. *בי אם־מאס מאסתנו . . .* — *For even if You had utterly rejected us, [lit. 'reject You rejected us'] — You have already raged sufficiently against us*. Although we sinned You did not have to increase rage against us as much as You did (*Rashi*).

The use of the double verb *מאס מאסתנו* 'Reject, You rejected us' is interpreted as referring prophetically to both Temples (*Alshich*).

Pesikta d'Rav Kahana translates: *If it is 'rejection', then You completely rejected us; but You are very 'wroth' against us*. That is, if God has rejected Israel, then there is no hope. If, however, He is no more than *wrothful*, then there is hope, for He Who is angered is likely to become reconciled.

V ²¹ Bring us back to You, HASHEM, and we shall
21-22 return, renew our days as of old.

²² For even if You had utterly rejected us, You
have already raged sufficiently against us.

Bring us back to You, HASHEM, and we shall return, renew
our days as of old.

Rav Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev explains these verses as follows:

Someone may divorce his wife for one of two reasons: for having found in her עֲרֻת דָּבָר, an immorality; or because she no longer finds favor in his eyes. If he divorces her for the former reason he may never remarry her; if for the latter, he may remarry her. This is how these verses הָשִׁיבֵנו, 'Bring us back' are to be understood. You did not 'divorce' us because of עֲרֻת דָּבָר, that our behavior was so

improper that You cannot ever take us back. Rather, You 'divorced' us בִּי אִם-מָאָס מְאֻתָּנוּ, because You utterly rejected us; i.e. we no longer found favor in Your eyes. As such You may bring us back to You.

הָשִׁיבֵנוּ — Bring us back, HASHEM
It is customary to repeat verse 21 rather than end with the words of rebuke in verse 22. We act similarly at the conclusion of *Isaiah*, *Malachi*, and *Ecclesiastes* [and thus end these Books on a comforting note] (Rashi).*

* "Jeremiah said: When I was going back to Jerusalem I lifted up my eyes and saw a woman sitting at the top of the mountain. She was clothed in black, her hair disheveled, crying and pleading for someone to comfort her. I, too, was crying and pleading 'who will comfort me?' I approached her and spoke to her, saying: 'If you are a woman, speak to me, but if you are a spirit, depart from me.'

She answered, 'I am your Mother Zion.' I told her: 'God will comfort you. . . Flesh and blood built you, flesh and blood destroyed you. But in the time-to-come' [says the Lord] 'I will rebuild you.' Thus it is written (Psalms 147:2) בּוֹנֵה יְרוּשָׁלַיִם ה', HASHEM is the builder of Jerusalem, גִּרְחֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל יִכְנֹס, He will gather together the dispersed of Israel'. Amen. Soon and in our own days, may the Holy One, blessed be He fulfill the verse that says of us (Isaiah 35:10): וּפְרוּיֵי ה' יִשְׁבּוּן וּבָאוּ צִיּוֹן בְּרִנָּה וּשְׂמֵחַת עוֹלָם עַל-רֵאשִׁים שְׂשׂוֹן וּשְׂמֵחָה יִשְׁיִגּוּ וְנָסוּ יִגְדּוּ וְנֶאֱחָזָה: And the ransomed of HASHEM shall return and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness; sorrow and sighing shall flee away" (Pesikta Rabbasi end of 26).

תושלבע

Rosh Chodesh Tammuz, 5736

A Chronology of Churban

(Following is a list of the major events leading up to the First and Second Destructions. The information is taken from *Toldos Am Olam I* by Rabbi Shlomo Rottenberg.)

- First Temple**
- 3316** — Yehoyakim ben Yoshiahu becomes king of Judea (*II Kings* 23:36);
- 3320** — Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon conquers Judea. He removes part of the Temple's holy vessels and children of the royal family taking them to Babylon (*Daniel* 1);
- 3327** — Yehoyachim (Yechoniah) ben Yehoyakim becomes king and reigns for only three months. Nebuchadnezzar exiles him to Babylon together with 10,000 people and the Torah sages (*II Kings* 24:16);
- 3327** — Zedekiah ben Yehoyakim becomes the last king of Judea (24:18);
- 3338** — The First Temple is destroyed. It had stood for 410 years.
- Second Temple**
- 3768** — Rome (the dominant power in Judea since 3648) begins to appoint the kings of Judea. The first Roman appointee is Agrippas ben Aristoblus.
- 3788** — The Sanhedrin is exiled (*Avodah Zarah* 9b). Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai, a student of Hillel the Elder (who died in 3768), becomes Head of the Academy (*Zemach David* 910).
- 3804** — Agrippas II becomes the last Roman-appointed king and Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel becomes Nassi (Prince).
- 3828** — The Second Temple is destroyed. It had stood for 420 years.

Bibliography of Authorities Cited in the Commentary

Italics are used to denote the name of a work. Bold italics within the biography indicate the specific book of that particular author cited in the commentary.

An asterisk (*) precedes the names of contemporary figures

Alkabetz, Rav Shlomo haLevi:

[b. 1505-Salonica; d. 1576 Safed]

One of the greatest Kabbalists and mystical poets of his day. Author of the Piyyut 'L'cha Dodi' recited every Friday evening. He was a contemporary and friend of Rav Yosef Karo, author of *Shulchan Aruch*.

He is often cited in Lechem Dim'ah, where he is referred to in various ways: 'Rashba haLevi'; Rav Shlomo haLevi; 'Harav ibn Alkabetz haLevi.'

He wrote commentaries on most of the Bible, the Passover Hagaddah, on *Kabbalah*, and was a noted Paytan.

In his Piyyut, 'L'cha Dodi,' he speaks of the sufferings of the Jewish people and their aspirations for Redemption. Probably no other Piyyut has reached the popularity of 'L'cha Dodi'; it is recited every Friday evening by all Jewish congregations throughout the world.

Almosnino, Rav Moshe:

Distinguished Rav and commentator. Born in Salonica, 1516, died in Constantinople about 1580.

His family dwelled originally in Aragon. Rav Moshe's grandparents were burned at the stake during the Inquisition, and his parents escaped and settled in Salonica, where he was born.

He was Rav of the Neve Shalom Spanish community in that city, and later of the Livyat Chen community.

Rav Almosnino was famous for his erudition and knowledge in both Torah and secular matters. In 1565 he represented the Jewish community

before their Sultan Selim II petitioning for the confirmation of their civil rights. After six attempts, the Sultan acceded to his request and issued a proclamation guaranteeing equal rights to Jews.

He published many works — both in Hebrew and Spanish. Some were published during his lifetime, some posthumously. Many of his works are extant in manuscript form, others have been lost.

Among his works are: *Tefilah l'Moshe* on Chumash; *Pirkei Moshe* on Avos; *M'amez Koach*, a collection of sermons; *Regimento de la Vida* (Way of Life) in Spanish. His commentary to the Five Megillos entitled ***Yedei Moshe*** was published in 1572.

Rav Almosnino is quoted extensively in *Lechem Dim'ah*.

Alshich, Rav Moshe:

[Also spelled Alshekh]

Rav, Posek and Bible Commentator. Born in Andriopol in 1508; studied Torah there in Yeshiva of Rav Yosef Karo. Settled in Safed where he spent most of his life and was ordained there by Rav Karo with the full *Semichah* re-introduced by Rav Yaakov Berav. Among his pupils was Rav Chaim Vital, whom he ordained in 1590.

He died in Damascus, where he was travelling, before 1600.

He wrote Commentaries on most of the Bible, and published a collection of 140 of his *halachic* Responsa.

His commentary to *Eichah*, ***Devarim Nichumim*** ('Comforting Words') was

originally published in 1601. The abridged form of his commentary appearing in many editions of the Bible as '**Kitzur Alshich**' was edited by Rav Eleazar Tarnigrad, Amsterdam, 1697. Tarnigrad added much original material into this abridgement which he attributed to the Alshich but which cannot be found in the Alshich's commentary.

Alter, Rav Yitzchak Meir

(1789-1866)

Gerrer Rebbe; founder of the Gerrer Chassidic dynasty. Rav Yitzchak Meir was a disciple of the Maggid of Koznitz, and later of Rav Simcha Bunem of Pshyscha, and of Rav Menachem Mendel of Kotzk.

After the Kotzker's death in 1859, Rav Yitzchak Meir was acknowledged Rebbe by the majority of Kotzk Chassidim.

His influence was far-reaching. Although his leadership lasted only seven years, he had a formative influence on the development of Chassidus in Poland. Gerrer Chassidus became a powerful element in Orthodox Polish Jewry.

He is most famous for *Chiddushei haRim*, novellae on the Talmud and *Shulchan Aruch*, and was frequently referred to by the name of his work, "The Chiddushei haRim."

Alter, Rav Yehudah Aryeh Leib:

(1847-1903)

Gerrer Rebbe; known by his work 'Sefas Emes'.

His father, Rav Avraham Mordechai, a great but chronically ill man, died when Yehudah Leib was only 12 years old. His upbringing fell to his grandfather, the illustrious Chidushei haRim. Yehudah Aryeh would study eighteen hours a day as a youth. It became widely known that a fitting successor was being groomed for the Chiddushei haRim.

He was 19 years old when his grandfather died and, despite the pleas of the chassidim, insisted he was unworthy to

become Gerrer Rebbe. Several years later, after the death of Rav Henach of Alexandrow, he acceded to their wishes and molded Ger into the largest chassidus in Poland.

A prodigious and diligent scholar, he nevertheless found time to counsel tens of thousands of disciples every year and to become an effective leader in Torah causes. His discourses were distinguished for profundity and originality.

Although he never wrote for publication, his writings were posthumously published as *Sefas Emes*, separate volumes of novellae on Talmud, and chassidic discourses on Torah and festivals.

Altschuller, Rav Yechiel Hillel ben David

Bible commentator of 18th century.

In order to promote the study of the Bible Reb Yechiel Hillel's father, Reb David, planned an easy-to-read commentary of Neviim and Kesuvim (Prophets and Hagiographa) based on earlier commentators.

His commentary to *Psalms*, *Proverbs* and *Job* was published before he died in 1753.

Rav Yechiel edited his father's remaining manuscripts and completed the missing books himself. By 1780, the entire completed commentary was published. It consisted of two parts: *Metzudas Zion* which explains individual words; and *Metzudas David* which provides a running commentary to the text. The commentary attained great popularity and has been reprinted in nearly every edition of the Bible.

The commentary to *Eichah* is entitled *Rishon Letzion* by Rav Yechiel Hillel.

Anaf Yosef

see Rav Chanoch Zundel ben Yosef.

Arama, Rav Yitzchak b. Moshe:

(1420-1494)

Spanish Rav, philosopher and preacher. He was Rav of Calatayud where he

wrote most of his works. After the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492, he settled in Naples where he died.

He is best known for his book *Akeldas Yitzchak*, a collection of allegorical commentaries on the Torah. First published in 1522, it has been reprinted many times and has exercised great influence on Jewish thought.

Because of this work he is often referred to as the 'Baal Akeidah' ['author of the Akeidah.]

He also wrote a *Commentary on the Five Megillos* which was printed together with his *Commentary to the Torah* in Salonica, 1573.

He wrote *Yad Avshalom*, a commentary on *Proverbs*, in memory of his son-in-law, Avshalom, who died shortly after his marriage.

ARIZAL

see Luria, Rav Yitzchak.

Ashkenazi, Rav Shmuel Jaffe:

16th Century Rav in Constantinople.

Not being satisfied with any commentary to the *Midrash*, Rav Shmuel devoted himself to writing a comprehensive commentary to *Midrash Rabba* and to the *Aggados* in the *Talmud*.

His first published work was *Yefe Mar'eh* on the *Aggados* in the *Jerusalem Talmud* (1597); *Yefe To'ar* to *Midrash Rabba: Genesis, Exodus, and Leviticus* (1606); *Yefe Anaf* to *Ruth, Esther, and Eichah* (1691); and *Yefe Kol* to *Song of Songs* (1739).

His commentary to *Ecclesiastes*, and his *halachic* writing are still in manuscript form.

Avodah Zarah

Talmudic tractate on *Seder Nezikin*.

Azulai, Rav Chaim Yosef David:

Known by his Hebrew acronym CHIDA.

Born in Jerusalem in 1724; died in Leghorn in 1806. Halachist, Kabbalist,

and bibliographer-historian, he possessed great intellectual powers and many-faceted talents.

He went abroad as an emissary and he would send large sums of money back to Israel. He ended his mission in 1778 in Leghorn where he spent the rest of his life.

His fame as a *halachist* rests on his glosses to *Shulchan Aruch*, contained in his *Birkei Yosef*, a work constantly cited by later authorities.

He was the author of the famous bibliographic work *Shem haGedolim*. Among his many works was the homiletical *Nachal Eshkol* on the *Five Megillos*.

Baal haTurim:

see Rav Yaakov ben Asher.

Bais Aharon

see Perlow, Rav Aharon of Karlin-Stolin.

Bass, Rav Shabsai ben Yosef

Born in Kalisz 1641; died at Krotoschin, 1718.

His parents were killed 'Al *Kiddush Hashem*' in the Kalisz massacres of 1655. He went to Prague where he excelled in the *Yeshivah* there. Possessing a fine voice he served as a member of the choir in the famous *Altneuschul* in Prague, hence his surname Bass.

Between 1674 and 1679 he travelled through Europe visiting libraries, and became profoundly interested in bibliographic studies. He established a publishing house in Breslau where his books were famous for their beautiful appearance. The first book he published was the then new commentary 'Beis Shmuel' on *Even haEzer*.

In 1680 he published his own work, *Sifsei Yesharim*, a well-arranged bibliographical listing of all books published till his time.

His most famous work is *Sifsei Chachamlm* — a commentary on Rashi's interpretation of Chumash and

Five Megillos — where he clarifies with admirable brevity the surface difficulties in Rashi's commentary, and which is an almost indispensable aid toward understanding and appreciating Rashi. It is printed alongside Rashi's commentary in most large editions of the Bible. It has also been condensed and appears in many editions as *Ikkar Sifsei Chachamim*.

Bava Basra:

Talmudic tractate in Seder Nezikin.

Bava Kamma:

Talmudic tractate in Seder Nezikin.

Behold a People:

see *Miller, Rav Avigdor.

Binyan Ariel:

see Rav Shaul ben Aryeh Leib of Amsterdam.

Rav Chanoch Zundel Ben Yosef

(d. 1867).

Rav Chanoch lived in Bialystock, Poland, where he devoted his life to writing commentaries on the *Midrash* and the *Ein Yaakov*.

He published two commentaries which appear side-by-side in the large editions of the *Midrash Rabba* and *Ein Yaakov*: *Eitz Yosef*, in which he strives to give the plain meaning of the text; and *Anaf Yosef* which is largely homiletical.

Rav Chanoch also published a commentary to *Pirkei Avo's*, but his commentaries to *Yalkut Shim'oni* and the *Mechilta* are still in manuscript.

Chidah:

See Azulai, Rav Chaim Yosef David.

Chidushei haRim:

see Alter, Rav Yitzchak Meir.

Chafetz Chaim:

See Rav Yisrael Meir haKohen.

Derech Hashem:

see Luzatto, Rav Moshe Chaim.

Dessler, Rav Eliyahu Eliezer:

(1891-1954).

One of the outstanding personalities of the Mussar movement. He was born in Homel, Russia.

In 1929 he settled in London. He exercised a profound influence on the teaching of Mussar, not only because of the profundity of his ideas, but also on account of his personal, ethical conduct.

In 1941 he became director of the Kollel of Gateshead Yeshiva in England.

In 1947, at the invitation of Rav Yosef Kahaneman, he became Mashgiach of Ponovez Yeshiva in Bnei Brak, Israel, and there remained until his death.

His teachings reflect a harmonious mixture of Mussar, Kaballah, and Chassidus. Some of his ideas were published by his pupils in *Michtav me-Eliyahu* (3 vols. 1955-64).

Dubna Maggid:

See Kranz, Rav Yaakov.

Eidels, Rav Shmuel Eliezer ben Yehuda haLevi:

1555-1631.

(Known as Maharsha — 'Moreinu ha-Rav Shmuel Eliezer'.)

One of the foremost Talmud commentators, whose *commentary* is included in almost every edition of the Talmud.

Born in Cracow, he moved to Posen in his youth. In 1614 he became Rav of Lublin, and in 1625 of Ostrog, where he founded a large Yeshivah.

Eiger Siddur:

A medieval manuscript found in Prague containing a commentary to the Siddur and a short running commentary to *Eichah*. Published in 1846.

Einhorn, Rav Zev Wolf:

Rav in Vilna, end of 19th century.

Author of *Peirush Maharzu*, comprehensive and well-detailed commentary to *Midrash Rabba* appearing in the Romm edition.

Rav Eleazar b. Yehudah of Worms:

[Heb. Eleazar of Germizah. Also known as *Baal haRokeach*].

1160-1237.

Scholar in the field of Halachah, Kabbalah, and also a paytan (composer of liturgical poems) in medieval Germany. Student of Rav Yehudah haChassid the author of *Sefer Chassidim*.

Rav Eleazar is known primarily for his authoritative halachic work *Sefer Rokeach*, which is quoted extensively in the *Shulchan Aruch*.

His students were many, among them Rav Yitzchak of Vienna, author of *Or Zarua*. Among his exegetical works are *Shaarei Binah*.

Emden, Rav Yaakov ben Zvi Ashkenazi

(Also known by his acronym Yaavetz).

Rav Yaakov was born in Altona in 1697. He studied under his father, Rav Zvi Ashkenazi (known by his work 'Chacham Zvi').

He sustained his family as a dealer in jewelry, but spent most of his time studying, gaining a reputation as a profound scholar. He declined many offers to become Rav in various communities, but in 1728 he was induced to accept the rabbinate in Emden, from which place he took his name. However, not wanting to be beholden to the community, he gave up his position after a short while.

He returned to his birth place, Altona, where he established a publishing house.

Rav Emden's reputation preceded him and he fought vigorously against the Shabbesai Zvi false Mashiach move-

ment which was flourishing at the time.

He was involved in a bitter controversy with Rav Yonasan Eyebescheutz which lasted even after Rav Yonasan's death. But even those who did not side with him acknowledged his honesty and sincere motivation.

Among his works are: *Lechem Shamayim*, a commentary on the Mishnah; *Sh'elos Yaavetz*, responsa; *Mor U'Ketziach* on *Shulchan Aruch*, *Orach Chayim*; *Siddur* with a commentary and introductory treatise: *Shaar haShamayim*.

Rav Emden died in Altona, 1776.

Epstein, Rav Baruch haLevi:

(1860-1940).

Born in Bobruisk, Russia. He received his early education from his father, Rav Yechiel Michel Epstein, author of *Aruch haShulchan*.

Rav Baruch later studied under his uncle, Rav Naftali Zvi Yehudah Berlin [the 'Netziv'].

He was the author of several works, but he is best known for a brilliant commentary to Chumash *Torah T'mimah*, in which he quotes and explains the Halachic and Aggadic passages on the various verses. He also wrote *Gishmei Bracha* on the *Five Megillos*.

Eshkol haKofer:

See Sava, Rav Avraham ben Yaakov.

Eyebescheutz, Rav Yonasan:

Rav, and one of the greatest Torah scholars of his generation.

Born in 1690 in Cracow; served as Rosh Yeshiva in Prague. Served as Rav of the 'Three Communities' — Altona, Hamburg and Wandsbek, until his death in 1796.

Rav Yonasan published extensively on Halachah and Bible. His most famous Halachic works were *Urim v'Tumim* on *Choshen Mishpat* (1775), and *Kreisi U'pleisi* on *Yoreh De'ah*. His homiletic

work, *Yaaros D'vash*, published posthumously, was reprinted many times.

He published a commentary on the Haftorahs entitled *Ahavas Yonasan*, in which is included his commentary to *Eichah*, *Alon B'chos*.

Because of his friendly relations with the government officials, he secured the right to reprint the entire Talmud — something which had been prohibited for centuries until that time.

Rav Yonasan's use of amulets sparked off a bitter controversy between him and Rav Yaakov Emden, repercussions of which lasted even after Rav Yonasan's death. All who knew Rav Yonasan vouched for his righteousness, scholarship and sincerity.

*Feinstein, Rav Moshe:

Contemporary Posek and Rosh Yeshivah, Harav Feinstein is considered by many to be the *Gadol Hador* — Torah leader of the generation.

Born in Russia in 1895, Harav Feinstein was known as a child prodigy. He came to America in 1937 and became Dean of Mesivtha Tifereth Jerusalem on New York's lower East side. Harav Feinstein responds to Halachic inquiries from around the world daily. Author of '*Igrose Moshe*' — 5 volumes of his Halachic responsa; and an ongoing series of *Dibrose Moshe* — his novellae on Talmud.

Some of Harav Feinstein's homiletic lectures were collected and published by Rabbi Avraham Fishelis in *Kol Ram* (Hebrew; 2 vols) and *Bastion of Faith* (English).

Galanti, Rav Avraham ben Mordechai

One of the foremost kabbalists in Safed during the second half of the 16th century. His father, Reb Mordechai, was among the Spanish exiles in 1492 from where he emigrated to Rome. Mordechai's original family name was Angello, but because of his handsome appearance and dignified behavior he was nicknamed by the Roman nobility

galant' uomo, from which was derived the surname Galanti, adopted by his descendants.

Rav Avraham, was a student of the illustrious kabbalist Rav Moshe Cordovero ("Ramak") whose works he emulated.

Because of his exceptional righteousness and modesty he was referred to by his contemporaries with the title "*haKadosh*," 'the holy one.'

His works include *Yare'ach Yekar*, a commentary on Zohar, an abridgement of which was made by Rav Avraham Azulai and published in Venice 1655 under the title *Zoharei Chamah* on Genesis and Exodus; *Zechus Avos*, a kabbalistic commentary on *Pirkei Avos*.

His most famous work is *Kinas Sesarim*, a kabbalistic commentary on *Eichah* (published in *Kol Bochim* alongside the commentary of *Ibn Shu'ib*).

The *Chidah*, in *Shem haGedolim* relates that Rav Avraham was a wealthy man, and it was he who built the mausoleum over the tomb of Rav Shimon bar Yochai and his son Eleazar in Meron.

He died in Safed, 1588.

Gans, Rav David.

(1516-1541).

Chronicler and mathematician.

Rav David was a student of the RAMA (Rav Moshe Isserles) and the MAHARAL of Prague (Rav Yehudah Loew), where he mastered his Talmudic studies.

He spent most of his life in Prague where he wrote many works, most of which have been lost.

Encouraged by the RAMA, Rav David published the historical work for which he is most famous: *Tzemach David*. The book is in two parts: one part deals with Jewish history; the other with general history.

This work has become a standard reference work for later chroniclers.

Gishmei Brachah:

see Epstein, Rav Baruch haLevi.

Heilprin, Rav Yechiel b. Shlomo:

(1660-1746).

Lithuanian Rav, Kabbalist and historian.

He was a descendant of RASHAL (Rav Shlomo Luria), and traced his ancestry back through Rashi to the Tanna, Rav Yochanan haSandlar.

He was Rav and Rosh Yeshivah at Minsk, where he studied Kabbalah and published several works.

He is most known for his *Seder ha-Doros*, a history from Creation down to his own time.

He based his work on *Sefer haYuchsin* of Rav Avraham Zacuto; *Shalshelos haKaballah* of Rav Gedaliah ibn Yachya; and *Tzemach David* of Rav David Gans, as well as on an abundance of Talmudic and Midrashic references.

Hirsch, Rav Shamshon Raphael:

(1808-1888).

The father of modern German Orthodoxy. He was a fiery leader, brilliant writer, and profound educator. His greatness as a Talmudic scholar was obscured by his other monumental accomplishments. After becoming chief Rabbi and member of Parliament in Bohemia and Moravia, he left to revitalize Torah Judaism in Frankfurt-am-Main which he transformed into a Torah bastion.

His best known works are the classic six-volume *Commentary on Chumash* noted for its profound and brilliant philosophical approach to Biblical commentary; and *Horeb*, a philosophical analysis of the mitzvot.

Ibn Ezra, Rav Avraham:

(Born 1089 in Toledo; died 1164).

Famous poet, philosopher, grammarian, astronomer — and above all — Biblical commentator. He also wrote a *Commentary on the Five Megillos*

In all his Bible commentaries he strived for the plain, literal meaning of the verse. His aim was to explain the etymology of difficult words within their grammatical context. Next to Rashi, his commentary on the Torah is most widely studied, and appears in almost all large editions of the Bible.

In France, he met Rav Yaakov Tam [‘Rabbeinu Tam’] — grandson of Rashi, and a deep friendship between the two followed.

According to some, he married the daughter of Rav Yehudah haLevi, and had five sons.

Legend has it that he once met the Rambam and dedicated a poem to him on the day of his death.

Ibn Janach, Rav Yonah

Born in Cordova, c 985; died in Saragossa, first half of 11th century.

One of the foremost ‘*Baalei Dikduk*’ (grammarians and philologists) of the early middle ages. Little is known of his life.

He published one of the first Biblical grammar books and dictionaries, the earliest to have come down to us in its entirety. It was originally written in Arabic and later translated into Hebrew by Rav Yehudah Ibn Tibbon. It is divided into two parts: *Sefer haRikmah*; and *Sefer haShorashim*.

He is often quoted by later Bible commentators and Hebraists such as: Ibn Ezra; ibn Daud; Kimchi; Mizrahi, Rambam.

The notable exception is *Rashi* who seems to have been unacquainted with his work (or who may have chosen not to quote him.)

Ibn Janach was also a physician and he published several treatises on medicine, which have been lost.

Ibn Shu'ib, Rav Yoel:

Rav and commentator in mid 15th century.

After the Expulsion in 1492 he settled in Aragon where he became Rav.

He published commentaries on several books of the Bible: *Nora Sehillos* on *Psalms*, *Ain Mishpat* on *Job*; and a commentary to *Song of Songs*. His **Commentary to Eicha** is printed alongside the commentary of Rav Avraham Galanti in *Kol Bochim* published in 1480.

Ibn Shushan, Rav Yehudah

Rav in Magnesia, about 1500.

Member of the illustrious Ibn Shushan Spanish family of Toledo, which can be traced back to the 12th century.

Little is known about Rav Yehudah. He is the author of a **Commentary on Eicha**, and is quoted extensively in many Biblical works, and by *Lechem Dim'ah*.

Ibn Yachya, Rav Yosef.

Bible commentator; member of the famous Ibn Yachya family of which many scholars were descendants.

He was born in Florence, Italy in 1494, his parents having fled to that country from Portugal.

He relates in his preface to his *Torah Or* that in her first month of pregnancy with him, his mother, under threat of being ravaged, had thrown herself off a roof in Pisa in order to preserve her modesty, and she was miraculously saved.

She then fled to Florence where he was born.

He published his **Commentary to the Five Megillos**. Two of his other works: *Derech Chaim* and *Ner Mitzvah* were consigned to flames at the burning of the Talmud in Padua in 1554.

Rav Yosef had three sons, one of whom was Gedaliah, the author of *Shalsheles haKabbalah*.

Rav Yosef died in 1534. Ten years after his death his remains were brought to Eretz Yisrael. Rav Yosef Caro arranged for his burial in Safed.

Kara, Rav Yosef

French Bible commentator, c1060-1130. [not to be confused with Rav Yosef Caro, 15 century author of *Shulchan Aruch*].

Rav Yosef was the student of his illustrious uncle, Rav Menachem Chelbo, whom he often cites in his commentary.

Rav Yosef resided in Troyes, the same city in which Rashi lived, and he frequented Rashi's house, where he made the acquaintance of Rashi's grandson, *Rashbam*.

Rav Yosef wrote a commentary on Torah — based upon Rashi's commentary which he enlarged and expanded upon. He also added glosses to Rashi's commentary which Rashi himself agreed with and later incorporated into his own manuscript.

Rav Yosef also wrote an independent commentary to most of Tanach. His commentary to **Eicha** was first published in 1486.

In his commentaries he followed the general style of Rashi but was not as brief. Sometimes whole sentences are translated into French. He cares more for the sense of the whole sentence than for the grammatical dissection of a single word. Although he prefers peshat, the simple meaning of the text, he does not altogether hold aloof from haggadic interpretation — which he held was an adornment of the text and was necessary to 'render Torah great and glorious.'

Kedushas Levi:

See Rav Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev

Kimchi, Rav David:

French grammarian and commentator; known by his acronym 'RADAK'.

Born in Narbonne, 1160; died there in 1235.

His father, Rav Yosef, also a grammarian died when Rav David was a child, and he studied under his brother, Rav Moshe, who had also published several volumes on grammar.

Radak's commentary on Prophets is profound, and is included in most large editions of the Bible.

Many have applied to him the saying from *Pirkei Avos*: 'Without *kemach* ['flour' i.e. 'Kimchi'] there is no Torah; such was his great influence.

His main work was the *Michlol*, the second edition of which came to be known independently as the *Sefer ha-Shorashim* (not to be confused with a work by the same name by Ibn Janach).

In his commentary, he stressed the *derech ha'peshat*, the plain sense, wherever possible, striving for clarity and readability, rather than the compression and obscurity of some of his contemporary commentators.

His *Commentary to Ruth* was published in Paris, 1563.

Kiflayim I'Sushiyah:

see Landau, Rav Yitzchak Eliyahu ben Shmuel.

Kitov, Rav Eliyahu.

Israeli scholar and author; died, 1976.

Famous for his *Ish uBeiso* ('The Jew and His Home'); *Sefer haTodaah* ('The Book of our Heritage'), both of which have been translated into English by Rav Nathan Bulman; and his series of *Sefer haParshios* on the Five Books of the Bible.

Kol Yaakov:

See Kranz, Rav Yaakov.

Kol Yehuda:

Kabbalistic and philosophical commentary to *Ruth*, *Eichah*, and *Esther*, by Rav Yehudah Leib ben Eliezer published in 1727.

Rav Yaakov Kranz:

(1741-1804).

Known as the 'Dubna Maggid.'

Born near Vilna; Rav Yaakov demonstrated his skill as a preacher at an early age, and was barely 20 years old when

he became *darshan* in his city. He later became *darshan* in several cities, but he achieved his fame as preacher in Dubna where he served for 18 years.

He came into frequent contact with the Vilna Gaon, who, it is said, enjoyed his homiletical interpretations, stories, and parables.

The Dubna Maggid's works were printed posthumously by his son Yitzchak, and his pupil Baer Flahm. Among these works were: *Ohel Yaakov* on *Chumash*; *Kol Yaakov* on the *Five Megillos*; *Commentary on the Passover Haggadah*; and *Mishlei Yaakov*, a collection of his parables.

Landau, Rav Yitzchak Eliyahu ben Shmuel:

(1801-1876)

Lithuanian Rav, Maggid, and Bible commentator.

Little is known of him. He was born in Vilna; married the daughter of the wealthy and well-known Tzadok Marshalkovitch of Dubna and was thus relieved of financial cares. He spent most of his life compiling his books and sermons using the method of Rav Yaakov Kranz, the Dubna Maggid.

In 1868 he became the *Dayyan* of Vilna, a position he held until his death.

He published commentaries to many books of the Bible. Well-known is his commentary *Mashal U'Melitzah*, in which he explains the verses by using parables; and his exegetical commentary — printed alongside the *Mashal U'Melitzah* — entitled *Kiflayim I'Sushiyah*, in which he translates difficult words and provides a running commentary, profoundly clearing up surface difficulties.

He also published commentaries to the *Tanna dibe Eliyahu*; to *Mechilta*; *Pas'shegen haDas* on Torah; *Acharis I'Shalom* on the Pesach Haggadah; *Simlah Chadashah* on the *Machzor*; and several volumes of Talmudic commentaries.

Lechem Dim'ah:

see *Uzeda, Rav Shmuel de.*

Rav Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev:

(1740-1810)

Chassidic Tzaddik and Rebbe. One of the most famous personalities of the third generation of the Chassidic movement.

He was born into a distinguished rabbinic family to his father, Rav Meir, who was Rav in Hoshakov, Galicia. It is said that at the moment of Rav Levi Yitzchak's birth the Baal Shem Tov remarked that a great soul had just descended from heaven which is destined to be the greatest intercessor of the Jewish people.)

He was drawn to Chassidus by Rav Shmelke of Nicholsburg, and he became one of the foremost disciples of Rav Dov Ber, the Maggid of Mezeritch.

He succeeded Rav Shmelke in Richwal, and later became Rav in Zelechov, and was thus known as the 'Rebb · of Zelechov' by many of his Chassidim.

He ultimately moved to Berditchev in 1785, and served as Rebbe there until his death. His fame grew throughout the world as a Torah scholar and Tzaddik.

Under him, Berditchev became a great Chassidic center and many — including great Torah Sages — flocked to consult with him.

His great love for every Jewish soul — always seeking the good side of every Jew, never the bad — permeated his very essence and he became the subject of many legends.

In his writings he notes that 'only he who admonishes Jewish people gently, elevates their souls and always extols them righteously, is worthy of being their leader.'

Although he did not found a dynasty, he had many pupils and left an indelible mark on Chassidim.

His most famous work is *Kedushas Levi*

— a commentary on the Torah and some holidays. It was published during his lifetime in 1798. An expanded edition — supplemented by his sons from manuscript — was published posthumously in 1811.

Lorberbaum, Rav Yaakov ben Yaakov Moshe of Lissa:

(Polish Rav and Posek. Known as the 'Lissa Rav'; or 'Baal Nesivos').

(1760-1832).

He was the great-grandson of 'Chacham Zvi.' His father, Rav Yaakov Moshe, died before Yaakov was born, and his relative Rav Yosef Teomim brought him up.

He studied under Rav Meshullam Igra, and later became Rav in Kalish where he wrote most of his works.

After he published — at first anonymously — his *Chavas Da'as* on *Yoreh De'ah*, and *Nesivos haMishpat* on *Choshen Mishpat*, he became acknowledged as an outstanding posek.

His contemporaries said of him that his learning was so pure and 'lish'mah,' that his halachic decisions were as acceptable and unquestionable as if 'from Moshe at Sinai.'

Together with Rav Akiva Eiger and the Chasam Sofer he vehemently attacked and opposed the *Maskilim* and Reformers.

In 1809 he responded to an invitation to become Rav in Lissa where he enlarged the Yeshivah to an enrollment of hundreds of students.

In 1822 he left Lissa due to community strife, and returned to Kalish where he spent his time publishing many more of his books.

Among his writings were *Imrei Yosher*, a comprehensive commentary on the Five Megillos, each published separately under different names. His profound commentary to *Eichah*, entitled *Palgei Mayim* appears in most large editions of the Bible.

Luria, Rav David:

(1798-1855; Known as RADAL).

Lithuanian Rav and posek. Student of Rav Shaul Katzenellenbogen of Vilna.

After the death of his mentor, the Vilna Gaon, Radal was considered one of the Torah leaders of his generation. His scholarly writings embrace almost all of Torah literature. Among his works is his commentary to the Midrash, **Chidushei Radal**, printed in the Romm edition of the *Midrash Rabba*.

Luria, Rav Yitzchak:

(Known as ARIZAL [from the initials of haEloki Rabbi Yitzchak, *zichrono livrachah*]).

The fountainhead of modern kabbalistic thought.

Born in Jerusalem, 1534, to his father, Rav Shlomo Luria, a relative of Maharshal.

While still a child, he lost his father. His mother moved the family to Egypt, and he was brought up by his wealthy uncle Rav Mordechai Francis in Cairo.

He studied at the Yeshivah of Rav David ben Zimra (Radvaz) who was his teacher, *par excellence* in Torah and kabbalah. He was a student / comrade of Rav Betzalel Ashkenazi (author of *Shittah Mekubetzes*) who himself was a student of Radvaz.

ARIZAL was beloved by his uncle, and at the age of fifteen, was given his cousin in marriage. He was thus enabled to continue his studies undisturbed.

His holiness manifested itself at an early age and students flocked to him, extolling his virtues and saintly qualities.

In 1570, at the age of 36, he moved to Eretz Yisrael and settled in Safed where he formed a circle of kabbalists among whom were Rav Moshe Cordovero (Ramak); Rav Shlomo Alkabetz; Rav Yosef Caro; Rav Moshe Alshich; Rav Yosef Chagiz.

His circle widened and his influence grew greatly. He was regarded by all

who knew him as a profound Tzaddik who had the power to perform miracles.

He entrusted his kabbalistic teachings to his disciple Rav Chaim Vital, who, according to ARIZAL possessed a soul which had not been soiled by Adam's sin.

After the ARIZAL's death in 1572, Rav Chaim Vital collected notes which the ARIZAL's students had made of their master's teachings, and published them. Among the works so published were: *Eitz Chaim*; *Hadras Melech*; *Marpei Nefesh*; *Tikkunei Shabbos*; *Commentary to Zohar Chadash*; and *Shulchan Aruch of the ARIZAL* incorporating his halachic customs. These customs are quoted extensively by later Halachic authorities, and his influence is immense.

ARIZAL revealed many of the sepulchres of Sages whose locations had been forgotten until his time. He is also credited with composing the Sabbath Zemiros: *Azamer Bish'vachin*, *Asader liSeudasa*, and *Bnei Haichala*.

He died in Safed, 1572, at the young age of 38.

Luzatto, Rav Moshe Chaim

(1707-1746)

Kabbalist; author of *Mussar* ethical works; and poet.

Born in Padua, Italy, Rav Moshe Chaim was regarded as a genius from childhood, having mastered *T'nach*, *Midrash* and *Talmud* at an early age. He later went on to delve into Kabbalistic and ethical studies.

He is most famous for his profound ethical treatise, *Mesilas Yesharim* ('The Path of the Upright') which has, alongside the *Chovos haLevavos* of Rav Bachya ibn Paquda and *Shaarei Teshuvah* of Rabbeinu Yonah, become the standard ethical-Mussar work.

Among his Kabbalistic works were: *Razin Genizin*, *Megillas Sesarim*; *Maamar haGeulah*; *Derech Hashem*.

In 1743, he emigrated to Eretz Yisrael. He lived a short time in Acre, and died there, with his family, in a plague.

Maharal:

see *Rav Yehudah Loewe ben Bezalel*.

Maharam Rothenburg:

see *Rav Meir b. Baruch of Rothenburg*.

Maharsha:

see *Eidels, Rav Shmuel Eliezer ben Yehudah haLevi*.

Margolios, Rav Chaim Mordechai.

Polish Rav and Posek; died in 1818.

Rav Chaim was Rav in Great Dubna, where he also operated a printing office.

Together with his brother Rav Ephraim [author of *Bais Ephraim* and *Mattei Ephraim*], he published *Shaarei Teshuvah*, a digest of the Responsa literature dealing with the laws of the *Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim*, from the time of Rav Yosef Karo until his day.

This work was continued on the three remaining sections of *Shulchan Aruch* by Rav Tzvi Hirsch Eisenstadt and published under the name *Pis'chei Teshuvah*.

Mashal Umelitzah:

Collection of homiletic interpretations on the Torah by Rav Avraham Naftali Galanti. Published in New York City during the last generation. (Not to be confused with the Bible commentary of the same name by Rav Yitzchak Eliyahu Landau.)

Matanos Kehunah:

see *Rav Yissachar Berman haKohen*.

Megilas Sesarim:

See *Luzatto, Rav Moshe Chaim*.

Rav Meir ben Baruch of Rothenburg:

German Tosafist and Posek.

Known by his acronym *Maharam Rothenburg*. Maharam was born in Worms 1215 to a family of illustrious Torah scholars.

During his early years he was taught by his father.

Among his first teachers were Rav Yitzchak ben Moshe of Vienna (author of *Or Zarua*) and Rav Shmuel of Wurzburg. Maharam also studied at French Yeshivos under the eminent Rav Yechiel of Paris.

On his return to Germany, he quickly gathered around him a band of devoted pupils who were eager to study under so brilliant a teacher.

He officiated as Rav in the following communities: Kostnitz, Augsburg, Wurzburg, Rothenburg (where he spent the major part of his life), Worms, Nuremberg and Mayence.

He was recognized by his Ashkenazi contemporaries as the Torah giant of the generation and his halachic decisions were accepted as authoritative.

As a result of constant persecution, many German Jews emigrated abroad and to Eretz Yisrael at the time. In 1286, Maharam was leading such a group when he was seized and thrown into prison in the fortress of Ensisheim, Alsace.

The King demanded an exorbitant ransom for his release. The Jewish community was ready to raise the sum and liberate their leader, but Maharam himself prevented any such high sum being paid for his liberation lest the government use this as a precedent for imprisoning important men to extort ransoms. He therefore put the community welfare over his own and heroically spent the next seven years in prison — until his death in 1293.

He submitted to his fate in the thought that it was the will of God whose ways are always just. Even in prison he was occupied solely with studying and teaching. Several of his students were allowed to visit him there. It was there that his pupil Rav Shimshon ben Zadok

compiled his 'Tashbetz.' He wrote, or revised a large part of his works; and his responsa now took the place of oral instruction.

He was a voluminous writer. He wrote *Tosafos* to various tractates of the Talmud; published various halacha codifications, and extensive amounts of responsa and novellae.

Maharam had many distinguished disciples. Among them: Rav Asher ben Yechiel ('*Rosh*'), Rav Mordechai ben Hillel (The '*Mordechai*'); Rav Yitzchak Madura ('*Shaarei Dura*').

Even after his death there was no peace. The King would not release his body, and his remains lay unburied for fourteen years until an exorbitant ransom was paid by a wealthy man, Reb Alexander Wimpan, whose only request was that when he dies he be buried alongside Maharam. His request was fulfilled.

Rav Meir Simcha haKohen of Dvinsk:

(1843-1926)

One of the Torah giants in the pre-Holocaust generation.

Rav Meir Simcha studied under Rav Moshe Danishevsky. He is said to have studied incessantly, even as a young child, not allowing himself any distractions from his Torah studies. While still young he gained a reputation as a brilliant Talmudic scholar and was known to have mastered both the Babylonian and Jerusalem Talmuds before his Bar Mitzvah.

He married the daughter of Reb Tzvi Paltiel, a wealthy man from Bialystok who supported him while he continued his studies under Rav Yom Tov Lippmann [author of *Oneg Yom Tov*].

His great work, *Or Sameach* on *Rambam* established him as an outstanding halachic commentator and Talmudic scholar throughout the Torah world.

At the suggestion of the Brisker Rav, Rav Chaim Soloveichik, he was invited

to become Rav in Dvinsk, a position he occupied for 40 years.

In 1906 he declined an offer to become Rav in Jerusalem as a result of the entreaties of the community of Dvinsk.

In his brilliant work on the Torah, *Meshech Chachmah*, Rav Meir Simcha drew freely on his vast knowledge of the two Talmuds and Midrashim giving new and profound interpretations. The work, which was published posthumously in 1927, attained wide popularity.

During World War I most of the Dvinsk community fled and only a few of the poorest inhabitants remained. Rav Meir Simcha stayed with them, declaring that as long as there were nine Jews in the city he would be the tenth.

He died in 1926.

Meshech Chachmah:

See preceding entry.

Michtav me-Eliyahu:

see Dessler, Rav Eliyahu Eliezer.

Michlol:

see Kimchi, Rav David.

Midrash:

see *Midrash Rabbah*.

Midrash haNe'elam:

see Zohar *Chadash*.

Midrash Lekach Tov:

Midrash on various Books of the Bible attributed to *Rav Toviah ben Eliezer* 11th century. The work has achieved great popularity and is quoted by many *Rishonim* such as Rabbeinu Tam, Rambam, *Baal halTur*, *Or Zarua*, *Shibolei haLeket*. *Ibn Ezra* also refers to it in his commentary.

This *Midrash* has been published at separate times on the various books of the Bible as the manuscripts have been re-discovered. *Eichah* was published in 1908.

Midrash Rabbah:

[Lit. 'The Great Midrash'].

The oldest Amoraic classical *Midrash* on the *Five Books of the Bible* and the *Megillos*.

[Note: Throughout the commentary of this Book, whenever 'Midrash' alone is shown as the source, the reference is to *Midrash Eichah Rabba*.]

Midrash Zuta.

Also called *Eichah Zuta* ('Minor Lamentations'). This *Midrash* was probably compiled before the 10th century. It is quoted by the author of *Midrash Lekach Tov* which was written in the 11th century.

It was published by Buber from a Parma manuscript in 1894.

*Miller, Rav Avigdor:

Contemporary Rav, noted lecturer and author. A major force on the American Orthodox scene. Rav in Brooklyn, New York. Author of *Rejoice O Youth!; Sing You Righteous; Torah Nation; Behold A People*.

Minchas Shay:

see *Rav Yedidiah Shlomo of Norzi*.

Moed Katan

Talmudic tractate in *Seder Moed*.

Rav Moshe ben Maimon:

Known by his acronym: **RAMBAM**; Maimonides.
(1135-1204).

One of the most illustrious figures in Judaism in the post-Talmudic era, and among the greatest of all time. He was a rabbinic authority, codifier, philosopher, and royal physician. According to some, he was a descendant of Rav Yehudah haNasi.

Born in Cordoba; Moved to Eretz Yisrael and then to Fostat, the old city of Cairo, Egypt.

At the age of 23 he began his *Commentary on the Mishnah*, which he wrote

during his wanderings. His main work was *Mishneh-Torah Yad-haChazakah*, his codification of the spectrum of *Halachah* until his day. This was the only book he wrote in Hebrew, all his other works having been written in Arabic, a fact he is said to have regretted later in life.

He is also known for his *Moreh Nevuchim* ('Guide for the Perplexed'), and for his many works in the field of medicine, hygiene, astronomy, etc.

Truly it may be said 'from Moshe to Moshe there arose none like Moshe.'

Rav Moshe ben Nachman:

Known by his acronym: **RAMBAN**; Nachmanides.

(1194-1270)

One of the leading Torah scholars and authors of Talmudic literature during the generation following Rambam; also a renowned philosopher, biblical commentator, poet and physician.

Born in Gerona to a famous rabbinic family, he is sometimes referred to, after his native town, as Rabbenu Moshe Gerondi. He spent most of his life in Gerona, supporting himself as a physician. He exercised extensive influence over Jewish life. Even King James I consulted him on occasion.

Already at the age of 16 he had published works on Talmud and Halachah.

Among his works were: *Milchemes Hashem*, in defense of the Rif against the 'hasagos' (disputations) of Rav Zerachiah haLevi in his *Sefer haMaor*; *Sefer haZechus*, in response to the 'hasagos' of the Ravad on the Rif; *Sefer haMitzvos*; *Iggeres haRamban*; *Iggeres haKodesh*; and his profound and encyclopedic *Commentary on the Torah*, which is printed in all large editions of the Bible.

In 1263 he was coerced by King James I into holding a public disputation with the apostate Pablo Christiani which resulted in a victory for the Ramban, but which aroused the anger of the church and resulted in his enforced

exile from Spain just in time to escape the death penalty. He then emigrated to Eretz Yisrael. In 1268 he became Rav in Acco, successor to Rav Yechiel of Paris. He died in 1276; his burial site has not been definitely ascertained.

Nachal Eshkol:

see *Azulai, Rav Chaim Yosef David*.

Nedarim:

Talmudic tractate in *Seder Nashim*.

Niddah:

Talmudic tractate in *Seder Tohoros*.

Palgei Mayim:

See *Lorberbaum, Rav Yaakov*

Perlow, Rabbi Aharon of Karlin-

Stolin:

(1802-1872)

Grandson of Rabbi Aharon the Great, founder of the Karlin chassidic dynasty, Rabbi Aharon the Second became grand rabbi and leader of the movement in 1826 at the young age of 24. During his long leadership, Karlin Chasidism reached new heights of influence in Polesie and Volhynia.

Under his guidance, groups of chasidim settled in Jerusalem and Tiberias establishing centers that still flourish. Rabbi Aharon was a strong and inspiring leader whose influence was particularly beneficial to the hard-pressed Jews of Russia under the harsh and oppressive reign of Czar Nikolai I.

His book, *Bais Aharon*, is one of the classics of Chassidic literature. It emphasizes uncompromising truth and sincerity, fervent prayer, and diligent Torah study — traits for which the movement is still noted more than a century after his passing. In 1864, he settled in Stolin, following the example of his father, Rabbi Asher. From that time

on, the movement became known as Karlin-Stolin.

Virtually decimated in the Holocaust, the movement survived in the person of Rabbi Yochanon who revitalized it in Israel and America. The present grand rabbi is his grandson, Rabbi Boruch.

Perush haTaamim:

(*Ibn Ezra's* Supplementary commentary to *Eicha*. See *Ibn Ezra*.)

Peskita d'Rav Kahana:

Ancient Aggadic Midrash, attributed to the 5th century Eretz Yisrael sage, Rav Kahana. Composed of *Peskitas*, with Midrashic discourses on the Sabbaths and festivals.

Pesikta Rabbasi:

Ancient Midrash; a collection of discourses dating from the first half of the first century, C.E. Divided in *Piskas* [sections] and containing discourses on the holidays, festivals and special Sabbaths. Several *piskas* are devoted to Tishah b'Av, the Destruction, and ultimate Comfort and Restoration.

Pirkei d'Rabbi Eliezer:

Ancient aggadic work attributed to the first century *Tanna*, Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanos.

Pri Tzaddik:

See next entry.

Rabinowitz, Rav Tzadok haKohen:

(1823-1900)

Born in Kreisburg, Latvia, young Tzadok attracted attention as a phenomenal genius. Orphaned at the age of six, he was raised by his uncle near Bialystock. Such was the child's reputation, that Rav Yitzchak Elchanan Spektor of Kovno made a point of testing him when he happened to be near by. He prophesied that 'the boy will light a great torch of knowledge in Israel'.

In later years, Rav Tzadok lived in Lublin where he became acquainted with Rav

Leibele Eiger, a disciple of Rav Mordechai Yosef of Izbica. Rav Tzadok became their disciple, and, with their passing, became Rebbe of the Chasidim of Izbica. He became known far and wide as the 'Kohen of Lublin'. The breadth and depth of his thought were astonishing. Many considered him the greatest Torah scholar in all of Poland.

Pri Tzaddik, is a collection of his discourses on the weekly portion, and festivals. He was a very prolific writer. Although much of his works have been published, he left many unpublished manuscripts that were destroyed during World War II.

Among his other works are *Responsa Tiferes Zvi*; *Meishiv Tzaddik*; and *Resisei Layla*.

Radak:

see *Kimchi*, Rav David.

Rambam:

see Rav Moshe ben Maimon.

Ramban:

See Rav Moshe ben Nachman.

Rashba haLevi:

see *Alkabetz*, Rav Shlomo haLevi.

Rashi:

see Rav Shlomo ben Yitzchak.

Rishon l'Tzion:

see *Altschuller*, Rav Yechiel Hillel.

*** Rottenberg, Rav Shlomo:**

Noted contemporary teacher, lecturer and historian. His monumental series, *Toldas Am Olam*, unifies all Talmudical Midrashic sources on the history from the latter period of the First Temple.

Saba, Rav Avraham ben Yaakov.

15-16th Century Kabbalist, Bible commentator and Darshan.

Rav Avraham was among those expelled from Spain in 1492. He moved to

Portugal where he wrote his commentary *Eshkol haKofer* to the *Chumash*, the *Five Megillos*, and *Pirkei Avos*. In his youth, many of his works were lost, and he was forced to rewrite them later in life from memory.

His commentary to the *Chumash* was entitled *Tzror haMor*.

According to the *Shem haGedolim*, he died on board a ship on Erev Yom Kippur 1508.

Sanhedrin:

Talmudic tractate in *Seder Nezikin*.

Seder haDoros:

see *Heilprin*, Rav Yechiel b. Shlomo.

Seder Olam:

Early Midrashic-chronological work. *Seder Olam* is mentioned in the Talmud (*Shab. 88a*; *Yev. 82b et al.*) and is ascribed to the *Tanna* Rav Yose ben Chalafta.

Sefas Emes:

See *Alter*, Rav Yehudah Aryeh Leib.

Shabbos:

Talmudic tractate in *Seder Moed*.

Shaar Bas Rabim:

Scholarly and erudite anthology of commentaries on the Torah and Megillos by Rav Chaim Aryeh Leib Yedvavnah; late 19th century.

Sefer haTodaah:

see *Kitov*, Rav Eliyahu.

Shaarei Binah:

see Rav Eleazar ben Yehudah of Worms.

Shaarei Teshuvah

see *Margolios*, Rav Chaim Mordechai.

Rav Shaul ben Aryeh Leib of Amsterdam:

Born 1717 in Risha; died in Amsterdam, 1790.

Member of famous rabbinical family.

Served as Rav in many important cities, and upon the death of his father he replaced him as Rav of the prestigious Ashkenazi community of Amsterdam, where he served until his death.

He published many works on Bible, Talmud and Halachah, most famous of which was *Binyan Ariel*.

When the Chidah visited Amsterdam, he stayed at the home of Rav Shaul and was so awed by his erudition and righteousness, that he praised him most flourishingly in his *Shem haGedolim*.

Shem haGedolim:

see Azulai, Rav Chaim Yosef David.

Rav Shlomo ben Yitzchok:

(Known by his acronym RASHI)

Leading commentator on the Bible and Talmud.

He was born in Troyes, France in 1040 — the year in which Rabbeinu Gershom M'or haGolah died. According to tradition, Rashi's ancestry goes back to Rav Yochanan haSandlar and to King David.

The summit of Rashi's commentaries was his commentary on the Talmud — an encyclopedic and brilliant undertaking. Nothing can be compared to the impact this commentary has had upon all who study the Talmud. Rashi's commentary has opened to all what otherwise would have been a sealed book. Without his commentary, no one would dare navigate the 'Sea of Talmud.' Every word is precise and laden with inner meaning. Rashi's corrections of the Talmud text were, for the most part, introduced into the standard editions and became the accepted text.

Rashi's *Commentary to the Bible*, too, made a similar impact — and virtually every printed Bible contains his commentary which is distinguished by its conciseness and clarity.

Many Halachic works from the 'School of Rashi' have come down to us: *Sefer haOrah*; *Sefer haPardes*; *Machzor Vitry*; *Siddur Rashi*; and responsa.

Rashi died on Tammuz 29, 1105. His burial place is not known.

Sotah:

Talmudic tractate in *Seder Nashim*.

Taanis:

Talmudic Tractate in *Seder Moed*.

Targum:

The ancient, authoritative translation of the Bible into Aramaic.

Teitelbaum, Rav Moshe:

(1759-1841). Founder of the Sigheter dynasty. A pupil of the Chozeh of Lublin. A renowned Tzaddik, he was among the first to spread Chassidus in the Northern and Central districts of Hungary in his capacity as Rav of Vjhely. Author of *Yismach Moshe*, considered one of the classic works of Chassidus.

Toldos Am Olam:

See *Rottenberg, Rav Shlomo.

Torah Nation

See *Miller, Rav Avigdor.

Torah T'mimah

See Epstein, Rav Baruch haLevi.

Toras Chesed:

see Yavetz, Rav Yitzchak ben Shlomo.

Tzemach David

See Gans, Rav David.

Uzeda, Rav Shmuel de

Born in Safed c. 1540.

He studied Kabbalah with Rav Yitzchak Luria [ARIZAL] and Rav Chaim Vital.

In 1557 he traveled to Constantinople where he published his commentary, an encyclopedic super-commentary on *Eichah*, *Lechem Dim'ah*, which has

been reprinted many times and appears in large editions of the Bible. His commentary to *Ruth* is entitled *Iggeres Shmuel*.

His most famous work is Midrash Shmuel, a detailed commentary on *Pirkei Avo*s with reference to many connecting sources such as Rabbenu Yona of Gerondi, Meiri, Rav Yosef Ibn Shushan, and Rashbam, which were at that time in manuscript, but have since been printed.

Rav Yaakov ben Asher

(1270-1340)

Possek and codifier; 'Baal haTurim'.

Son of Rav Asher ben Yechiel (the 'ROSH') under whom he studied. He was born in Germany, and in 1303 he accompanied his father to Toledo, where he lived in great poverty, and devoted his life to Torah.

Rav Yaakov's enduring fame rests on his encyclopedic Halachic codification, *Arbaah Turim*, which is the forerunner of our *Shulchan Aruch* today, and as a result of which he is referred to as the "Baal haTurim."

The arrangement and wealth of content made it a basic work in halachah and it was disseminated greatly through the Jewish world. It became so widely accepted, that when Rav Yosef Caro wrote his major work, *Bais Yosef*, he decided to "base it upon the *Turim*" because it contains most of its views of the *Poskim*."

Rav Yaakov also wrote a comprehensive commentary on the Chumash anthologizing the literal explanations (*p'shat*) by earlier Bible commentators. To the beginning of each section he added "as a little appetizer, *gemmatrios* and explanations of the *Masorah*, in order to attract the mind." Ironically the whole work was printed only twice. It was just these "appetizers" that were popularly published alongside most editions of the Bible under the title *Ba'al HaTurim*.

Among Rav Yaakov's students was Rav David Abudarham.

According to *Shem haGedolim* Rav Yaakov died en route to Eretz Yisrael.

Yalkut Shimoni

The best known and most comprehensive Midrashic anthology covering the entire Bible.

It is attributed to Rav Shimon ha-Darshan of Frankfort who lived in the 13th century.

The author collected *Midrashim* from more than 50 works, arranging them into more than 10,000 statements of *Aggadah Halachah* according to the verses of the Bible.

Yavetz, Rav Yitzchak ben Shlomo

Turkish Bible commentator in the second half of the sixteenth century.

He published commentaries on *Pirkei Avo*s and most of the Bible. His commentary to *Eichah* is entitled *Toras Chesed*.

His commentary appears in the Bible edition called '*Kehilas Moshe*' published in Amsterdam, 1778. He is quoted extensively by Rav Shmuel Uzeda in *Lechem Dim'ah* and *Iggeres Shmuel*.

Rav Yedidiah Shlomo of Norzi

Rav and Commentator.

Born in Mantua 1560; died in 1626. Became Rav in Mantua in 1585.

Rav Yedidiah consecrated the greater part of his life to studying the *Masorah* of the Bible — and by studying every previously printed *Masorah* text, comparing the various readings scattered through *Talmudic* and *Midrashic* literature, as well as in published and unpublished manuscripts.

The resulting work was entitled *Poretz Geder*, but was published under the name *Minchas Shai*.

This work, which was as perfect as thorough learning and conscientious industry could make it, has become the most accepted work in establishing the *Masorah*. The *Minchas Shai* is printed in the back of all large Bibles.

Rav Yehudah Loewe ben Bezalel.

Known as the MAHARAL of Prague.

One of the seminal figures in the last 500 years of Jewish thought, Rav Yehudah was born c. 1512 and died in Prague in 1609. His genealogy can be traced to King David.

Although he was universally acknowledged as one of the rabbinic greats of the era, while his life was not an easy one. He delayed his marriage for 20 years due to financial difficulties. He was Chief Rabbi of Moravia, residing in Nikolsburg, for 20 years. Then, in 1573, he transferred his yeshiva to Prague, the Torah metropolis of Europe. Upon two different occasions, he accepted the rabbinate of Posen in order to settle communal strife.

He was elected Chief Rabbi of Prague in 1597 as a very old man. It appears that the position had been denied him up to then because of his outspokenness in attacking social evils and religious laxity.

Though commonly known as a folk hero and miracle worker, his greatest contribution was his formulation of a self-contained system of Jewish thought. His many books and lengthy sermons formed the basis for much of the significant writing of succeeding centuries.

Among his many erudite works were: *Novellae* on *Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah*; *Gur Aryeh* on the Torah; *Be'er haGolah* on the *Passover Hagaddah*; *Derech Chaim*; *Netzach Yisrael*; *Nesivos Olam*, etc. Many of his works are extant and were recently republished in an 18-volume set: *Sifrei Maharal*.

Yefe Anaf

See *Ashkenazi*, Rav Shmuel Jaffe.

Yerushalmi, Peah

Tractate *Peah* in the Jerusalem Talmud.

Yevamos

Talmudic tractate in *Seder Nashim*.

Yismach Moshe:

see *Teitelbaum*, Rav Moshe.

Rav Yissachar Berman haKohen

Known as Berman Ashkenazi.

16-17th Century commentator on the Midrash.

Very little is known about him except that he was born in Sczeczbrzesyn, Poland, and that he was a student of the Rama (Rav Moshe Isserles).

He is the author of the famous commentary to the Midrash Rabba, *Matanos Kehuna*, first published in 1584, and appearing subsequently in nearly every edition of the Midrash.

Rav Yissachar makes it very clear in his introduction that he was very concerned with establishing the correct text for the *Midrashim*, basing his text upon all the various printed editions up to his time and on various manuscripts.

Rabbeinu Yonah of Gerona:

Spanish Rav and Moralist of the thirteenth century.

Rabbeinu Yonah was a cousin of Ramban (Nachmanides). He was one of the most prominent students of Rav Shmuel ben Avraham of Montpelier ('*Min haHar*').

Rabbeinu Yonah was one of the people who banned the Rambam's (Maimonides) *Moreh Nevuchim* out of fear that philosophical influences — rampant at the time — would cause untold harm to the religiosity of the people. But when he saw that this anti-Rambam controversy was getting out of hand — and even resulted in the public burning of the Talmud in the same place where the philosophical writings of Rambam had been destroyed — Rabbeinu Yonah publicly admitted that he was wrong in all his acts against the works of the Rambam. In his repentance he vowed to travel to Eretz Yisrael and prostrate himself over the grave of the great teacher and implore his pardon in the presence of

ten men for seven consecutive days.

He left France with that intention, but was detained — and died before he was able to fulfill his plan, in 1263.

Rabbeinu Yonah wrote many works, among them commentaries on portions of Tanach; commentary of Avos; Chid-dushim on several tractates of the Talmud; and his famous Mussar works, after reprinted: *Iggeres haTeshuva*; ***Shaarei Teshuvah***; and *Sefer haYirah*.

Rabbeinu Yonah established Yeshivos. Among his most prominent pupils were Rav Shlomo Adret (Rashba).

He stayed in close contact with his

cousin, Ramban, and Ramban's daughter married Rabbeinu Yonah's son. When Rabbeinu Yonah died, his daughter was pregnant. When she gave birth to a son, Ramban told her to name the child Yonah so that he will assuredly excel in Torah and piety.

Zohar Chadash:

A part of the Zohar which was printed slightly later than the main body of the text. Incorporated within the *Zohar Chadash* is the *Midrash ha'Ne'elam* on the Torah, and the *Zohar Chadash* on the *Five Megillos*.